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ST. KATHARINE OF ALEXANDRIA.

A Dramatic Legend.

BY NOELL RADECLIFFE,

AUTHOR OF

"ALICE WENTWORTH," "THE LEES OF BLENDON HALL," ETC.

34
"E la cara di Cristo e fida ancella
Ch' elesse il ben della più nobil vita."

Tasso—*Gerusalemme liberata*, Canto XI., Stanza 9.



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THE ideas which have expanded into the following "Dramatic Legend" were suggested partly by Mücke's picture of Angels carrying St. Katharine of Alexandria to her tomb on Mount Sinai, partly by the traditionary accounts of her beauty, her learning, her enthusiastic devotion, her mystical espousals, and the persecution she underwent. Retaining these main points however, I have not been scrupulous in adhering to her precise story, as related in Biographies of the Saints, but have woven into it some details which—perhaps—more properly belong to that of her namesake, St. Katharine of Sienna.

N. R.



A.M. 16 NOV. 18

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

LYCOPHRON, *a wealthy Citizen of Alexandria.*

NICANOR, *his Kinsman.*

ARCHIPPUS, *a Friend of LYCOPHRON and NICANOR.*

PORPHYRIUS, *a Citizen of Antioch.*

GALLUS, *the Roman Proconsul.*

LYSIAS, *a Christian, formerly the Slave of LYCOPHRON'S
brother.*

ALCIMUS, *a Christian Elder.*

The PRIEST *of the Christian Community in Alexandria.*

HEGESANDER, *an Alexandrian Citizen of low condition.*

A CENTURION.

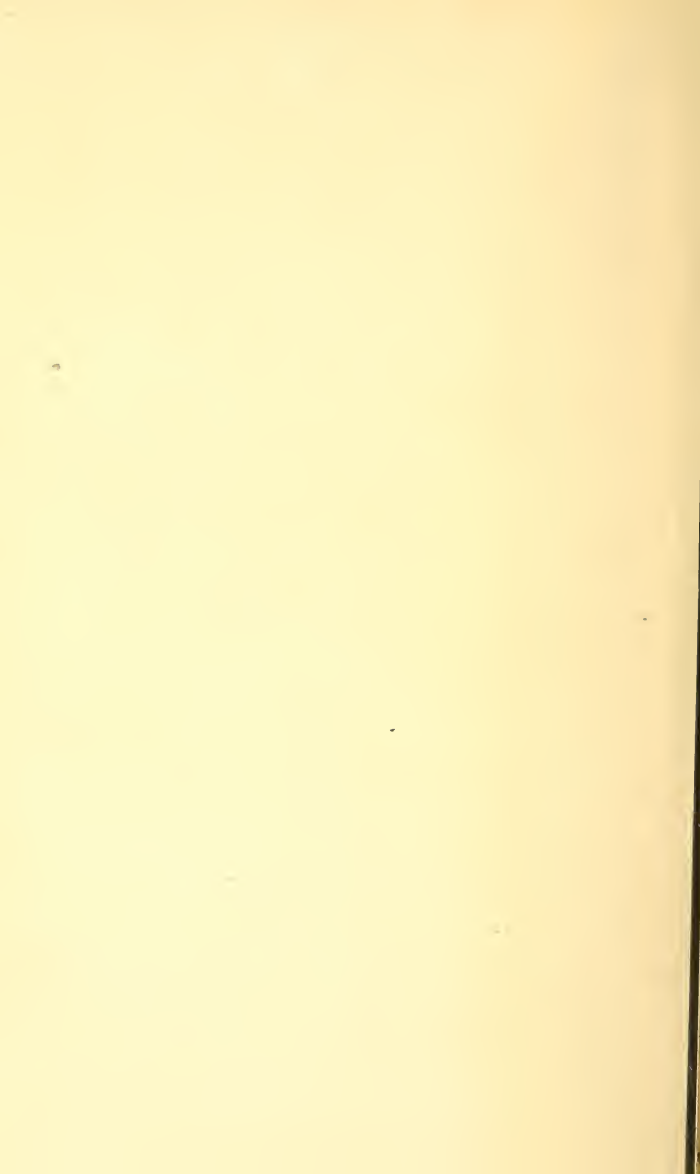
A Lybian Slave.

Soldiers, Slaves, Citizens, Chorus of Christians, &c.

KATHARINA, *daughter of LYCOPHRON.*

THEODORA, *her Nurse.*

CLYMENE *and* LEUCIPPE, *Wife and Sister of LYSIAS.*



ST. KATHARINE OF ALEXANDRIA.

ACT I.

SCENE I. LYCOPHRON'S *House. The Women's Apartment, opening into an inner court adorned with statues and vases of flowers.*

KATHARINA and THEODORA at their looms.

THEODORA.

Thy firmness, Katharina, will ere long
Be tried.

KATHARINA.

How tried? What mean'st thou, Theodora?

THEODORA.

Last night I heard thy father tell Erastus
That he—perchance this day—expects the coming
Of young Porphyrius, son of that Ephesian
Whom most he prized among his friends of old.—
From Antioch (where his mother's kin have bred him)
The youth is hast'ning; for what end—guess thou!

KATHARINA.

It cannot be my father should forget
The word he pledged me!

THEODORA.

Nor hath he forgot.
He heeds his vow; but fain would he be loosed
Therefrom by thine own will; and in that hope,
Once more unto a change thereof he'll move thee.

KATHARINA (*aside*).

Vain is his hope! but not on mine own strength
I lean for pow'r to strive with one so loving,
Albeit so blinded.

LYCOPHRON *enters*, KATHARINA and THEODORA *rise*,
and THEODORA *retires to a little distance*. LYCO-
PHRON, *after greeting his daughter, seats himself on a*
couch, while KATHARINA stands respectfully beside him.

LYCOPHRON.

Child, at thy desire,
A lustre back (thou wert fifteen that day),
I pledged me to forego the right whereby
Thy father could require thy full obedience
To his award, as touched thy lot in marriage.

KATHARINA.

Yea father, of thy goodness I enjoy
This freedom here to dwell in mine own home,
In blest virginity.

LYCOPHRON.

I meant not, daughter,
Nor said, that thou shouldst waste thy flow'r of youth,
E'en till it wither, in the lonely quest
Of wisdom or of holiness; nor yet
That thou shouldst tend mine age, uncheered, unaided
By ties more glad'ning; I but told thee, maiden,
That none should own thee, save such one as fate
Made pleasing in thine eyes.

KATHARINA.

And I might prove
Right hard to please.

LYCOPHRON.

So are ye all, until
Ye 've seen the youth predestined. Sit thee down
Beside me here. Now hearken, Katharina;

Thou know'st that from thy cradle thou wast promised
Unto Porphyrius, son of Hyparinus.
Father and son were both my guests, what time
Thy mother bore thee; when I told my friend
" 'T was but a girl the gods had granted me,"
He pointed to his boy, who at our feet
Sat playing, and then spoke, " If that thou wilt,
Behold in him thy son! three lustres hence
A blythesome bridal shall unite the pair!"
I grasped his hand, and with an oath we bound
Our souls, that naught save death, or foul dishonour
Of either of the twain we thus betrothed,
Should hinder us from mingling of our blood
By tie so fair. I saw not Hyparinus
Again—his thread was early cut; but soon
As of his death I heard, unto his brother
I wrote renewed assurance of the bond
Knitted in this our city, and bestowing
My daughter on Porphyrius; since I deemed not
My vow less weighty for that he to whom
'T was uttered, had departed. In the name
Of my friend's son, an answ'ring pledge was giv'n me,
And unto him I deemed thee surely bound,
Until that morn, when yielding to thy pray'r,
I loosed, unwillingly, the knot that tied thee
To one whose youth, perchance, had not fulfilled
The promise of his childhood. I did send
Erastus unto Antioch, to make known
That I was minded to defer thy marriage
Until thy twentieth year, determining
That if, when came that time, thou found'st Porphyrius
Unlike to that his father's son should be,
I'd give to him the daughter of Nicanor,
Our kinsman, with a dowry rich as thine.

KATHARINA (*embracing* LYCOPHRON).

Thou hast right well devised, most gen'rous father,
How thou may'st give this youth all worldly profit
Of thine alliance, sparing yet thy child;
And gladly will I deck Arsinoe
In bridal wreath and veil.

LYCOPHRON.

It may be, daughter,
 Thyself wilt wear the crown thou talk'st of setting
 Upon a brow less fair. Arsinoe
 May well content her with a meaner bridegroom
 Than I for thee should claim. Nay, hearken still;
 Such *was* my purpose, if this same Porphyrius
 Proved base of soul, or foul of form, had lavished
 His time and wealth in sottish joys or lawless.
 But they that have beheld him, who have known
 What 's told of him in Antioch, bring me word,
 That my friend's son, both in his mind and semblance,
 Is that my friend was once. Wherefore, me thinketh
 He should be worthy thee—and thou wilt find
 Thy bliss in thine obedience.

KATHARINA (*after a pause*).

I had deemed,

Father.....

LYCOPHRON.

That I would let thee cheat thyself
 Out of all gladness of thy life! I told thee
 Thy fancy should be heeded, and the youth
 Is warned thereof; he knows that I have bound me
 To give thee but to one who in thine eyes
 Could merit love! He comes, content to try
 His fortune; thou shalt look on him or e'er
 I fix thy doom. Thou fear'st lest, spite of fame,
 Thy bridegroom be ill-favoured?

KATHARINA.

Nay, my father,
 I rather deem that they have truly spoken,
 Who told thee that the son of Hyparinus
 Was wise and goodly as his sire. But be he
 As fair of form as is the marble image
 Of him men call the Sun-God, be his spirit
 Mighty and keen as their's whom earth has held
 Her wisest, still, he wins him not thy daughter.

LYCOPHRON.

No! then whom wouldst thou wed withal? Come,
 tell me!

KATHARINA.

With one whose beauty is unfading, endless,
As the bright stars above us ! One whose might
Exceeds Imperial glory ! One whose wisdom
Is by naught else excelled than by the love
Wherewith he doth embrace whate'er will turn
To him for help and hope ! To such a lord
I fain would knit my soul.

LYCOPHRON.

And where wilt thou
Find such ?

KATHARINA.

Not on this earth !

LYCOPHRON.

'T is well thou knowest
So much !

KATHARINA.

No ; here below I find him not ;
Yet I of him may still be found ! At least,
I'll wait for him till death. My maidenhead
Is unto him devoted.

LYCOPHRON.

I perceive
That thou art minded to resist my will ;
And shroud'st thy disobedience in a mist
Of visionary hopes and fears, all taught thee
By that wild Christian lore, wherefrom 't was mine.
T' have better guarded thee ! But who could deem
(Noting the eager love that did impel thee
To search through Plato's page) that thou wouldst stoop
From study of that high philosophy,
To feed on Jewish legends, and delight thee
With ravings of those men who hold it virtue
To spurn the gods our city bids us rev'rence !

KATHARINA.

To that philosophy my spirit clung,
So long I knew naught firmer, whereupon

To lean me ; but what man by stretch of thought
 Could but conceive, hath God himself declared
 In form of man.

LYCOPHRON.

Ah, so thou say'st. I care not,
 Though in thy mind this doctrine do excel
 That which beneath the porch, or in the grove,
 Hath been set forth (in speech more fair, I trow,
 Than thy rude teachers boast), so thou content thee
 With reading of their scrolls, with due fulfilment
 Of their unjoyous rites ; but if thou make
 A mantle for rebellion of that folly,
 Bethink thee, Katharina, that thy father,
 No less than priests and rulers, can forbid
 Thy sharing in the weekly feast observed
 By them this superstition blinds. I've spared thee
 Till now ; henceforth I were but fondly foolish,
 Leaving thee free to work thine own undoing !

KATHARINA.

Say, father, how should rites thus pure and holy
 Undo us who partake them ?

LYCOPHRON.

They divide
 The daughter from the sire—set bars that part
 The bridegroom from the bride ! Therefore I hate
 That lore of thine.

KATHARINA.

Oh father, speak not thus !

LYCOPHRON.

And hatest thou not mine ? I well believe
 Thou lov'st me still ; not yet unto thy pale
 And bleeding God hast thou so yielded up
 Thy heart, that thou shouldst banish thence thy father !
 But thou abhor'st those blessed ones, before
 Whose glorious forms I bow ; yea, shudderest
 At sight of our Olympians : while I fain
 Would grant a place unto thy Crucified
 E'en on our hearth, so thou wouldst but fulfil
 In weightier things my bidding !

KATHARINA.

To thy gods
 Thou art not bound as I to mine ! For thee
 They died not ; scarce dost thou believe their being ;
 Still less thou 'dst seek to mould thee in their likeness,
 Who sinned more foully—so their legends tell—
 Than frailest men.

LYCOPHRON.

Take heed—take heed. I hold thee
 But rash and over zealous ; there be those
 Would call thee impious.

KATHARINA.

It may be.

SLAVE (*entering*).

A stranger,
 My lord, doth wait within the hall for leave
 To greet thee.

LYCOPHRON.

Is 't a youth ?

SLAVE.

He hath not passed
 His age's flow'r, of form is tall and goodly.

LYCOPHRON.

It is Porphyrius ! Guide him hither, boy !
 [*Exit Slave.*]

KATHARINA (*rising*).

Hither !

LYCOPHRON.

Yes, hither ; true, this hall is giv'n
 To thee and to thy damsels ; but no less
 'T is mine, as is the dwelling from the roof
 To the foundation ; and thou scarce need'st fear
 Bold eye or daring speech, when 't is thy father
 Receives the guest. Thou art not called to bear
 Thy part in welcoming the stranger youth
 Thus soon !

[KATHARINA retires, and seats herself be-
 side THEODORA, where a curtain conceals
 her from the view of PORPHYRIUS as he
 enters the apartment.]

LYCOPHRON to PORPHYRIUS (*embracing him*).

I ask not who thou art ! Thy features
Are those of Hyparinus in his prime.

PORPHYRIUS.

I thank the gods that thus my form makes known
My lineage to my father's friend.

LYCOPHRON.

I fain
Would graft thee this same day into my house,
At once would give thee that wherefore thou 'rt come
This weary way !.....but.....I may not so speed
Unto my word's fulfilment as my heart
Doth urge me. Think not youth, therefore.....

PORPHYRIUS.

I came not,

Oh Lycophon, to claim as right what thou
May'st grant, or yet withhold, as thou shalt deem
'Tis meet and well. But be therein thy pleasure
Such as it may, I've gladly travelled hither,
If only to renew the kindliness
Of those past days, which to my memory
(Blended with recollections of my sire)
So oft return, when once before I dwelt
A guest in thine abode.

LYCOPHRON.

To stately manhood
Those twenty years have brought thee ; I the while
Have known life's cares and burdens ; but at sight
Of thee, my son, it is as though my youth
Warm'd me afresh !

PORPHYRIUS.

More lovingly I'm welcomed
Than hope had promised me, albeit I looked not
For a cold greeting. I had earlier known
(Ay, by an hour) how happily 't is given me
To please a host so honoured, were it not
I tarried at my entrance in this city
Hearkening to that I liked not.

LYCOPHRON.

Wherefore linger
To hear that did mislike thee?

PORPHYRIUS.

'T was because
Methought 't was well to learn the verge and bearing
Of somewhat that did meet mine ear. 'T was false;
Thereof I doubted not—awhile I doubted
If I should warn thee of th' injurious tale
Men tell of thee.

LYCOPHRON.

Of me, my son? What say they?

PORPHYRIUS.

An Alexandrian, to his home returning,
With me passed through the city gate; there met him
His friend, of whom he asked, "What latest rumour
Gave work to busy tongues?" and by their talk
I straight perceived, that they who envy thee
Thy wisdom and thy wealth, have said thy house
Doth shelter Christians! Yea, have spread the lie
Till it hath upward reached to the Proconsul,
Who—if these truly spake—o'ertrustingly
Heeds their report, whose wits cannot discern
Betwixt divine Philosophy's pursuit
And idlest superstition.

LYCOPHRON.

For thy warning
I thank thee; but the news thereof may scarce
Amaze me.

PORPHYRIUS.

Hast thou then, in this thy city,
Such ruthless foes, that thou, from very custom,
Tak'st calumny thus meekly?

LYCOPHRON.

Till this hour
I knew not I was slandered; say, Porphyrius,
Named they the Christian guest I harbour here?

PORPHYRIUS.

So far they ventured not ; but yet they spake
As though they 'd heard enough to breed thee peril.
Wherefore.....

KATHARINA (*starting forward, and now first becoming
visible to PORPHYRIUS, who gazes on her with mingled
astonishment and admiration*).

No peril shall o'ertake my father !
For I, who 've wrought him this, will straight declare
Unto our rulers that 't is I—I only—
Who worship in this house the Crucified !

LYCOPHRON.

Abide, abide ! Wait, girl, till they shall ask thee
Of this thy faith !

KATHARINA.

The hour is come that dooms me
To witness thereunto.

LYCOPHRON.

Not yet. Ofttimes
Thou 'st said thy new religion looseth not—
Confirms each bond of duty ; if 'tis so,
Obey thy sire, nor move from hence—remaining
In womanly subjection unto him
Thou most shouldst rev'rence !

PORPHYRIUS.

Then 't was truth I heard !

KATHARINA.

Yea, stranger.

PORPHYRIUS.

And thus fair and young thou 'st giv'n thee
To yon dark worship ?

KATHARINA.

Say'st thou dark ? As sunlight
'Tis bright and clear !

LYCOPHRON.

Porphyrius, in thy hand
 Thou hold'st her life ! but by the memory
 Of Hyparinus, I adjure thee, spare
 The daughter of his friend, albeit she err !

PORPHYRIUS.

My lips can ne'er reveal what to mine ear
 Had never reached, but for the gen'rous trust
 Wherewith thou call'dst me, as thy very son,
 Into this inmost—yea, most sacred—chamber
 Of thy whole mansion.

LYCOPHRON.

As in outward frame,
 So in thy soul no less, thou matchest him
 Who was my friend of yore !

[THEODORA comes forward, and leading
 KATHARINA away from her Father with
 some difficulty, retires with her to the
 inner court, into which the apartment
 opens, where they continue to walk up
 and down in earnest conversation.

LYCOPHRON (*taking PORPHYRIUS by the hand*).

Most luckless man
 Of men am I, my son ! Thou seest the cause
 Why Lycophon to Hyparinus' heir
 Feared to espouse his child, infected thus
 With madness that draws down upon her head
 Heav'n's wrath, and earthly vengeance.

PORPHYRIUS.

I nor fear
 Jove's thunder, nor Imperial threats, so thou
 But give to me the maid. 'Mid rites of love,
 And matron duties, soon will she forget
 The fantasies that haunted her while lasted
 Her lone virginity.

LYCOPHRON.

I would I thought
 As thou, who know'st her not ! But she's the harder

To deal with, in that to her woman's wit
 She's added so much learning as may pass
 For such in woman. The more fool was I
 With joy to look on her, when she of old
 Bent o'er the scrolls of Plato or Chrysippus,
 Whom now she spurns as ignorant and impious !
 Wherefore I fear me sore thy reasonings
 Will find one reason-proof. Still, there is none
 May move her, if not thou. She hath defied
 All arguments wherewith I've sought to free
 Her spirit from the net that hath entwined it ;
 Yea, and she scorns the joyous Hymenæan.....
 Wherefore.....Yet if thy speech might more avail
 Than mine, to turn her from the maze of ill
 She's strayed into, a good deed 't were, by her,
 And me.....and.....by thyself, if verily
 Thou car'st to own her, now thou know'st her folly !

PORPHYRIUS.

Thou jestest not ?

LYCOPHRON.

Nay, by the gods ! I'm scarce
 In jesting mood ; I ever wished her thine ;
 But now 't is noised abroad I harbour Christians,
 Upon her yea or nay, when bid to wed
 With one of the old faith, hangs life or death.

PORPHYRIUS.

I thought not, Father Lycophon, that ever
 Past studies to such dainty use should serve,
 As wooing of a maiden ! But right well
 I like the office : 't is an easier fight
 Than bandying words with sophists.

LYCOPHRON (*turning to the inner court*).

May the gods

So grant it ! Katharina, come and tell
 Our guest the reason of the faith that's in thee.

KATHARINA (*coming forward*).

Unto our guest ! Oh father, how may I
 Speak to one trained in subtlest schools, and taught
 With strength of words to prop each argument ?

LYCOPHRON.

If thou confess thee ignorant, my daughter,
Then surely shouldst thou yield unto the wise.

KATHARINA.

If wise they be; but.....I would not my weakness
Betrayed a holy cause.

PORPHYRIUS.

A cause that 's just,
And holy, needs no giant for its champion.

KATHARINA.

'Tis a true word thou speak'st! and though my tongue
Be all unskilled, yet, stranger, if thou seek
To learn that we believe, I will not shun,
As best I may, God's counsel to declare.

[KATHARINA *seats herself*; PORPHYRIUS,
at a sign from her Father, takes the
chair beside her; while LYCOPHRON,
though continuing to watch them, retires
to some distance. THEODORA returns to
her loom.

PORPHYRIUS (*aside, after a pause*).

Methinks she waits my question. (*Aloud*) Katharina,
I needs must marvel—(seeing thou hast bathed
Thy spirit in those springs of wisdom deep
And pure, that in our father's land of old
Flowed from the lips of sages and of bards)—
That thou shouldst turn thee to the fabled tales
Of Galilean fishers.

KATHARINA.

It hath pleased
Our God to shame that wisdom that doth lean
On its own strength, by choosing *them* to bear
His message unto men, in whom no pride
Of earthly learning dwelt, or worldly cunning.

PORPHYRIUS.

So think'st thou? But if messengers thus mean
Be chosen, then at least the lore they spread

Should own some loftiness t' exalt its teachers ;
 While base is all their law, fantastical
 Their rites, if so it be—as men have told me—
 That they do hold that same to be their God,
 Which is their sacrifice ! Seek through all lands,
 You find no race so blinded ! none who strive
 Thus of set purpose to obtain our mock'ry !

KATHARINA.

To them who by the light of earthly knowledge
 Behold us, 't is no marvel if our rites,
 Our laws, our worship, do but seem to prove us
 Senseless and blind. Yet thou speak'st truth,
 Porphyrius !

The Lord whom we adore, for us *was* slain,
 A holy sin-off'ring and sacrifice ;
 Yea, therein is our boast and our rejoicing !
 Thy lip eurls scornfully, as though thou askedst,
 " Why should a God thus stoop, and thus endure ?
 How may a God know pain ? " 'T was through the love
 He bore us, to redeem us from the curse
 Our sins had earned, to rescue our lost race
 From the fell might of them that dwell below,
 To whom our souls were forfeit ; nor could less
 Than a God's blood suffice to pay the ransom !

PORPHYRIUS.

Thine eye, thy tongue, glow hot with fiery zeal ;
 And though thy form be fixed in holy stillness,
 No vot'ry wild of Cybele, no priestess
 Of madd'ning Dionysius, so doth kindle
 At mention of their God ! Wherefore me seems
 'T were waste of words to tell thee that thy creed
 Alike by reason and experience
 Is shown to be a coinage of man's brain—
 Since reason and experience thou heed'st not.

KATHARINA.

Sure both may fail, when therewith we would reckon
 How it may please high heav'n to deal with men !

PORPHYRIUS.

We seek not to set bounds to heav'nly might ;

But can it be, that He who ruleth all,
 (To whom the wise look up far o'er those powers
 Who sway the elements, and live through nature),
 That He—th' Omnipotent—should reck if mortals
 Bow to himself alone, or cast some incense
 Upon the Sea-God's altar, or the Sun's?
 The all-pervading, all-embracing soul
 Of heav'n and earth is gracious and benign;
 Nor wills that we should perish—as ye Christians
 Hold it necessity—because your rulers
 Command ye to adore your city's gods!

KATHARINA.

So may it seem to one whose thought conceives
 Naught truer, holier, than such shadowy being.
 The living God, the Lord who with his blood
 Hath bought us, doth require from us our all;
 Our heart, our love, our worship! Who denies
 His Master, him his Master shall deny.

PORPHYRIUS.

Wouldst thou, Oh maiden, prove thy fealty
 To this stern master, as they must, who own
 His rule, before the judgment-seat of Gallus?

KATHARINA.

So help me He I serve! There is naught else
 For her who is baptized unto his name!
 Nay more;.....but.....If I 'm summoned hence—if
 straight
 I'm called to my confession, and so perish—
 Be thou a son to yon old man, Porphyrius;
 Be thou his age's comfort!

PORPHYRIUS.

How might I
 Give that I had not? Comfort! Where were mine,
 If thee I lost, thou fairest and thou dearest?
 Art angered, Katharina?

KATHARINA.

No—not angered;
 For thou know'st not—ay, deem'st me thy betrothed.

PORPHYRIUS.

And *art* thou not ?

KATHARINA.

I 'm pledged; but not to thee.

PORPHYRIUS.

Thou 'st bound thee to another ?

KATHARINA.

Chafe not thus !

My loved one of no earthly mould is framed.

PORPHYRIUS.

A phantom, or a fable ! I defy
Such unsubstantial bridegroom !

KATHARINA.

Say not so !

Take heed—my race and thine were ever friends !
And I would not thou brav'dst a pow'r whose might
Thou know'st not of !

PORPHYRIUS.

I thank thee for thy care,
Sweet maid, though little reek I of the danger
Thou bid'st me shun ; nor will I anger thee
With moek'ry of that husband of thy soul.
But from Him I will win thee, Katharina,
By loving thee as never God nor man
Did love !

KATHARINA (*rising*).

As never *man* did love—it may be ;
But not to hear smooth speech was I called hither.
I 've done my father's bidding, telling thee
What thou ear'st not to learn.

PORPHYRIUS (*rising, to LYCOPHRON, who now draws near*).

Say, Lycophron,
Forbidd'st thou me to tell unto thy daughter
How well I love her ?

LYCOPHRON.

I forbid thee not,
My son ; but many an hour shall yet be thine,

Wherein upon such theme thou may'st discourse,
 Seeing thou art our guest. Now to my friends
 And kindred would I make thee known, Porphyrius;
 Beneath the shady porch of our Gymnasium
 They 're gathered by this hour; to all I've spoken
 Of Hyparinus' son.

PORPHYRIUS.

I follow thee,
 My host. Farewell, mine own betrothed!

KATHARINA.

Farewell,

Guest of my father!

[*Exeunt* LYCOPHRON and PORPHYRIUS.

So—'t is said abroad

A Christian lurketh here; and even therefore,
 More than of old my father strives to bind me
 In marriage ties. Therein—he deems—is safety,
 For him—for me. Oh blinded sire! Oh rash
 And earth-bound youth, who from my God would part
 me!

THEODORA (*rising from her work*).

Thou hast sat long in converse with this bridegroom,
 Whom thou so fear'dst! Dost dread him still?

KATHARINA.

There's naught

In him that I should dread.

THEODORA.

Then thou dost yield thee

To thy sire's will?

KATHARINA.

I meant but that the sight
 And speech of this Porphyrius (though I own him
 Goodly and quick of wit) shake not my purpose;
 Nor may they.

THEODORA.

Child, thou know'st not thine own spirit;
 For though as maiden thou art ripe, as woman
 Thou art full young!

KATHARINA.

Methinks I know it well.

THEODORA.

Art verily content to wait the day
 ('T will come ere long), when thy fresh Spring shall
 fade,
 And change for gloomy Autumn and chill winter,
 Yet ne'er have heightened into Summer's glow?

KATHARINA.

I am.—

THEODORA.

And wert thou ever? Thou didst say
 Five years had passed since this thy resolution.

KATHARINA.

Yes, ever. No—not *ever*! Thou shalt hear
 That which ('t is now full twelve months past) befell me,
 The day I was nineteen years old. 'T was thus:—
 Our friends and kindred had departed all
 After the birth-day feast we here had giv'n them;
 My father slept beside the hearth; the echoes
 Of songs the damsels had been singing me
 Rang in mine ears—the unforgotten lays
 Of Sappho, of Mimnermus! well thou knowest
 How sweet!—as though with flow'ry wreaths they
 fetter

The list'ner's soul in chains of honeyed words.
 Ten thousand thoughts of pleasure and of pain,
 Ten thousand recollections of old tales,
 Rushed through my soul, and shook mine inmost being!
 Whereat—albeit none saw—I felt I blushed.
 I sought to turn me unto holier themes;
 When flitted straight my mem'ry to the story
 I read thee once, of her whose sire's rash vow,
 In Gilead's land, bade perish in her bloom;
 How, 'twixt her doom and death, albeit resigned
 Unto her father's will, upon the mountains,
 Amid her youthful feres, she mourned her maidhood;
 Like her bewailed I my virginity!
 Yet soon I roused me; and as low I knelt,
 Humbly I prayed unto th' All-Merciful

For guidance to my heart, strength to my will.
That night I scarce had laid me down, when sleep
Deeper than wont came o'er me. Soon, me thought,
Roaming I knew not where, mine eyes beheld
That which they most desired; the fleshly form
Which our Anointed Lord in childhood wore
On earth. Upon his maiden mother's knee
He sat, and beckoned with his finger small,
Till fearless I drew near, and unappalled,
Gazed on that awful innocence. The babe
Clasped my left hand, and on my bridal finger
He placed a ring. When I awoke next morn,
That ring still girt my finger. I was wedded
Unto my Lord, and mourned no more my maidhood!
From that day forth, such love I bear my bridegroom,
That aye, by night and day, in death or life,
I still rejoice in my virginity.

THEODORA.

Can such things be?

KATHARINA.

To thee the tale, albeit
Confirmed by handling of this heav'n-sent token,
May well seem wondrous—ay, no more perchance
Than are our vainest night-dreams; I but told it
To thee who yet art unbaptized, unsealed
By the Lord's deepest stamp, to show wherefore
Nor beauty nor soft speech of man hath power
To move thy child, and which her choice must be—
(If choose she must) betwixt Porphyrius' bride-bed
And the dread doom by Gallus dealt on Christians!

ACT II.

SCENE I. *The Market-place in Alexandria. On one side of it is the PROCONSUL'S ivory chair; opposite to which is placed a small altar, with statues of Jupiter and of Mercury, a vase of incense, cups of wine, &c. Lictors and a guard of Soldiers stand round. Citizens pass and repass; scribes are seated with their tablets before them. A temple of Jupiter is in the background.*

GALLUS *stands in front, conversing with* NICANOR *and* ARCHIPPUS.

GALLUS.

And so ye say Porphyrius of Antioch
Is now the guest of Lycophron? That looks not
As though the host were Christian; for the youth
Is come of lineage that hath never swerved
From service of our ancient gods, from duty
Unto our rulers; and albeit he's giv'n him
Rather to search of that some men call wisdom,
Than unto studies that would more avail
One called on by his birth and wit alike
To strive for honour in the camp or forum,
Still he hath ever kept him to the doctrine
Of those calm teachers, whose first precept bids us
Worship according to our country's law,
Whate'er that law enjoins; yea, he hath wielded
The weapons that philosophy bestows
(Such as they are!) to prove how vain and baseless
Are the new-fangled dreams that guide the sect
I've sworn t' uproot. Though in good truth no *words*
Will serve that turn, be they as wise and weighty
As the sev'n sages spake! In brief he's shown him
Too loyal to his prince, to our old rites
Too true, to cherish friendship with a slave
Of yon weak superstition. What yest're'en
Was told me, by some men I take small count of,
As though the shrewd and wealthy Lycophron
Leaned to those madd'ning errors, had its growth
In the accusers' malice or their folly.
If once I deemed it true.....

NICANOR.

My kinsman, Gallus,
Is free from all such taint. Would I could speak
As boldly for the women of his household !

GALLUS.

The women, verily ! These things o'erpass
Such judgment as I own. How cometh it
That wife or daughter of a citizen,
Who's well affected to the state, and rules him
By reason's law, should dare thus far to stray
In paths forbidden ? He must guide his house
With a slack hand, who lets a woman choose
The shrine whereat she'll worship. But of this
I'll speak with thee anon. To others now
Must I give heed.

*[GALLUS seats himself in his ivory chair,
as LYSIÁS is brought in guarded, and
followed by his wife CLYMENE and his
sister LEUCIPPE, his accuser HEGESAN-
DER, and two witnesses.]*

GALLUS to HEGESANDER.

Is this the man, whose crimes
Against the gods and Cæsar, were revealed
By Damasippus and by Myrsilus ?

HEGESANDER.

The same ; and these, here standing, will repeat
The witness that they've borne ere now. He fled
In fear of what should chance.....but through the night
Thy soldiers tracked him, and with his accusers
Thou seest him face to face.

GALLUS.

Is thy condition
Servile or free ?

LYSIAS.

I thank my God, and one
Who now is with the dead, Eurymedon,
Son of Charistus, mine estate was free,
From ten years past, till now that these have bound me.

GALLUS.

A freedman! Then of thine own will it was—
Through no compelling force—that thou refusedst
To share the sacrifice wherewith thy friends
Sought favour from on high for prince and people?

CLYMENE.

My Lord, their guile.....

GALLUS.

To thee I speak not, woman.
Say, Lysias, is their witness false or true?

CLYMENE (*aside to* LYSIAS).

Say not 't is true!

LYSIAS (*aloud*).

I may not call it false;
Albeit the charge of malice is begotten.

GALLUS.

If so thou hold it, thou may'st lightly clear thee;
Cast but a grain of incense on yon flame
Burning before Jove's altar, or pour down
The wine that fills that goblet as drink-off'ring
To Hermes, all shall see 't was not for lack
Of rev'rence to the mighty gods thou shunnedst
The feast these bid thee to..... What! doubttest thou.....
Delay'st thou e'en to prove thine innocence?

LYSIAS.

My lord.....

GALLUS.

Nay, speed thee! [*To* CLYMENE *and* LEUCIPPE.
Hearken, I will grant him
Space till the dial's shadow thus far reach,
[*Indicating a sundial near the judgment-seat.*
Wherein to curb his pride, and straight obey.

[*GALLUS turns round to converse with* NICANOR *and* ARCHIPPUS; *LYSIAS stands motionless, CLYMENE and LEUCIPPE whispering to him, while KATHARINA, veiled, and attended by THEODORA, appears from the opposite side, as if about to cross the market-place, but stops to observe what is going on.*

THEODORA.

I pray thee, dearest mistress, hasten on,
That we may reach yon crypt, unmarked, untracked.

KATHARINA.

I may not hasten, for I see good Lysias,
Fettered and guarded !

CLYMENE (*to a bystander*).

If he worship not,

What shall befall him ?

Citizen.

What befell Eudoxus

Last week.

CLYMENE.

Oh Heaven ! Have pity, noble Gallus !

GALLUS.

Thy husband's fate in his own hands is laid.

CLYMENE (*aside*).

Then is he lost ! he will not sacrifice !

LEUCIPPE.

Oh brother ! (*To GALLUS and the bystanders*) Yet he
ne'er blasphemed your emp'ror !

Must he thus choose ? His doom's gone forth ! They'll
slay him !

KATHARINA (*to LEUCIPPE and CLYMENE*).

Is't for the faith of Christ he thus is perilled ?

LEUCIPPE.

Yes !—

CLYMENE.

No !—men have accused him, but.....

LYSIAS.

I'm called

To witness to the truth ; and thus.....

KATHARINA.

Say first,

Ye men of Alexandria, and thou,
Our ruler, should not judgment rather light
Upon the teacher of an evil lore,
Than on its simple scholar ?

GALLUS.

It should crush
Teacher and scholar both. But canst thou name
The foul perverter, who hath cost this freedman
His senses, and.....'t is like.....his life?

KATHARINA.

Dismiss

Thy poor and lowly captive, and I'll tell thee
Who wrought upon his soul.

THEODORA.

Hold, hold! my child!

GALLUS.

I may not loose him.

KATHARINA.

Nay, thou must, if aught
Of justice guide thee! for he ne'er had known
That faith which thou abhor'st, wer't not for me.

GALLUS.

For thee!

KATHARINA.

Yes! tell them, Lysias, that I lie not!

[THEODORA *rushes away*.]

Tell him 't was I, who gave mine uncle's freedman
The Book whereby they deem thou art perverted.

LYSIUS.

Thou sav'st not me, and slay'st thyself, oh maiden!

GALLUS.

Tell thy name, damsel.

KATHARINA.

Katharina, daughter

Of Lycophron.

GALLUS.

Unveil thee.—Answer now,

[KATHARINA *unveils herself*.]

Art thou too Christian? But bethink thee first
What hangs on thy reply.

*Re-enter THEODORA, bringing with her LYCOPHON
and PORPHYRIUS, who press eagerly through the crowd
towards KATHARINA.*

KATHARINA.

I have bethought me
Thereof; and 't is sev'n years since—

LYCOPHRON (*to KATHARINA*).

What dost thou
Before this judgment-seat? My daughter stands
Unveiled for all to gaze on!

KATHARINA.

I but did
His bidding who here rules us.

GALLUS.

Lycophron,
My office doth forbid that I should own
Respect of high or low, grey-beard or virgin;
And this, thy daughter, hath almost declared her
Christian.

LYCOPHRON.

She hath not!

NICANOR.

No—not yet hath she
Pronounced the damning words.

LYCOPHRON.

Nor will she ever!
(*To KATHARINA*) Speak not! and veil thy face. (*She
veils herself*). 'T were surely well,
Gallus, that thou shouldst leave unto a sire
The right and pow'r of chastisement and counsel,
When one like her in age and in estate,
Errs through rash ignorance.

GALLUS.

Thou 'st scarce so bred
Yon most rebellious maid, that I should dare
Trust unto thee her chastisement.

KATHARINA.

My father
Knew not.....

LYCOPHRON.

Peace, daughter, an thou'dst 'scape my curse!

PORPHYRIUS.

Take surety for the damsel, that no more
She so offend !

GALLUS.

Her father's I accept not ;
He is too weak of will—trains not his child
In the good path.

PORPHYRIUS.

For him and her I bind me
In whatsoever penalty thou namest.

ARCHIPPUS (*aside to GALLUS*).

Thou wilt not say him nay ?

GALLUS (*aside to ARCHIPPUS*).

I would I might !
But he hath wealth and wits might make of him
A foe might cross me oft. (*Aloud*) Porphyrius,
I know not if thou 'rt wise, or hast the pow'r
T' enforce that thou dost promise ; still thou art
So honoured in thy home, and in this city
So welcome, yea, art held so fast a friend
Of all whereto our citizens should cleave,
That I 'll deny thee naught—will deal with thee
In lib'ral fashion too.

[*At a sign from GALLUS, the guards who
had surrounded KATHARINA draw back
and leave her free, upon which LYCO-
PHRON places her in the charge of THEO-
DORA and other Slaves, while PORPHY-
RIUS converses apart with GALLUS.*]

LYCOPHRON.

Hence with thee, girl !
And you, ye servants of my house, your lives,
If ye lose sight of her, shall answer it.

KATHARINA.

But Lysias !

LYCOPHRON.

Talk not to me.

PORPHYRIUS.

I will strive

Far as I may, for him too, Katharina.

[*Exeunt* KATHARINA, THEODORA, and
other *Slaves of* LYCOPHRON.]GALLUS (*aside*).She's passing fair! the sea-born goddess blooms not
More freshly, Juno steps not statelier!(*Aloud to* LYCOPHRON) I've stretched to th' utmost
verge that pow'r to spare,

Wherewith (e'en as with might to slay) I'm trusted;

But albeit at thy pray'r I thus refrain

From urging of thy daughter to confess

Here in this throng the errors that beset her,

She needs must bear some questioning thereon

Or in thy house or mine. 'T were scarce fulfilment

Of that I owe to Cæsar, if or fear

Or favour could so warp me, that I shunned

Such duty of mine office.

LYCOPHRON.

Hearken, Gallus!

I'll speak out plainly. If thou question her,

She'll own to thee, in very waywardness,

Far more e'en than she's dreamt of. Judge thyself

If it be wise and well to chafe such spirit

To frenzied deeds and words, the punishment

Wherof must tell to all, that from the lowest

This taint hath upward crept unto the noble;

While—hearken yet—if thou but let what chanced

This day as warning stand, withholding thee

From goading of her pride to wild defiance,

Through rev'rence of her sire, 'mid happy ties

Of marriage soon, 'mid woman's tranquil labours,

Her ardent soul will cool, will own the check

Of reason and of custom; Katharina

Ere long will be as thou and I would see her.

GALLUS.

I fain would think it; but if she refuse

All show of retractation, who is there

Among thine equals who will take to him
A Christian bride?

PORPHYRIUS.

That will I gladly, Gallus!
Counting, as counts her father, on the calm
And healing might of time—perchance of love—
For op'ning of her eyes to this world's bliss,
And teaching of her heart a happier lesson
Than those now graven on her virgin soul,
That knows not of life's pleasures.

GALLUS.

If she be
A very Christian, scarcely will she wed thee.

PORPHYRIUS.

So help me Aphrodite's winged son—
Ay, and so help me Lyeophron—I trust
To win her yet.

GALLUS.

'T is said each man best knows
That most concerns him; and I pray the gods
It so do prove with thee, Porphyrius.
I yield me, Lyeophron; 't is not to all
I'd grant the same—yet I consent to hold
Thy daughter's marriage with this youth as pledge
Of her obedience to our laws no less
Than unto thee; but see the rite be speedy.

LYCOPHRON.

Ay, speedy it shall be.

GALLUS (*aside*).

If she be that
Wherefore I take her, mad as e'er was Mœnad,
The more they press their aim, the more she'll spurn
Bridal and bridegroom both. (*Aloud to PORPHYRIUS*)

Thou fain wouldst see
This freedman too released? (*Pauses, appearing to
listen to a whisper from PORPHYRIUS*)
Well, for this time

(I know what thou wouldst say) I'll not require
That he before mine eyes do sacrifice.

[*Exit* LYCOPHRON. *The soldiers unbind*
LYSIAS; GALLUS, ARCHIPPUS *and*
NICANOR *leave the market-place.*

LYSIAS (*to* PORPHYRIUS).

I thank thee, noble stranger! Thou wast bred
In Antioch, say they not?

PORPHYRIUS.

'T is so.

LYSIAS (*aside*).

In Antioch

We first were giv'n our name. (*Aloud*) And thou art
plighted
To Katharina?

PORPHYRIUS.

Yea.

LYSIAS.

God grant thee grace
To wear that jewel as becomes its worth!
God grant thee His best blessing through thy bride!
[*Exit* LYSIAS *with his wife and sister.*

PORPHYRIUS.

It scarce can fail. But whither hath my host
Sped on? Thank heav'n, yon Roman's avarice
Surpasses e'en his pride. Now must I haste
Upon her father's footsteps to Kath'rina,
In strength of love to talk her doubts away.

[*Exit* PORPHYRIUS.

SCENE II. LYCOPHRON'S *House.* *The Women's Apartment.* KATHARINA and THEODORA *in front*; two
female Slaves stand at a distance.

THEODORA.

Had I not called him, child, thy limbs were now
Wrenched on the rack, or in the fire consuming.

KATHARINA.

Perchance 't were better so; yet my flesh shrinks

From that thou speak'st of—would they but destroy
Swiftly, with axe or sword—I could endure
Such end right well !

THEODORA.

Yes, thou ! but where were I ?
And where thy father, maiden, if the light,
The joy of his old age, were quenched for ever !

KATHARINA.

Oh hapless father ! yet, he is of those
Whereof th' Apostle speaks, "that to themselves
They are a law," by their own choice fulfilling
That which God's will commandeth. I will deem
For him there's mercy, though the gift of faith
By doom inscrutable be yet denied him.

LYCOPHRON (*from within*).

Come hither, Theodora ! haste, I wait thee.

[*Exit* THEODORA.]

KATHARINA.

So he's returned—yet comes not here ! I fain
Would know whereof they commune. My heart tells me
Some trial harder than I've dreamed of threatens.
Why said I not the word ? What barred my speech,
When the Proconsul asked "Was *I* too Christian ?"
'T was not through fear of him, or aught his wrath
Could lay on me ; no, for I felt a strange
And awful pleasure as I braved his might ;
But 't was my father's eye, my father's voice,
That smote my tongue with dumbness ; was it well
Or ill to heed them ?—Is it sin to wish
I were already dead and still and painless,
With naught t' endure or strive with more ? Shrink not,
Thou coward soul, from sorrow that is borne,
From battle that is waged for thy Redeemer !
Were I my father's son, I had not flinched
From perils of the spear and bow—had followed
The hosts of Caesar to the burning soil
Of Persia, or Pannonia's savage wastes—
Nor shamed my race. Then shall I doubt and dread,

When called to fight beneath a nobler banner
 Than earthly kings display ! The spotless Lamb
 Therein gleams white upon a blood-red field ;
 And whoso bleeds for Him, His blood will save !
 Yet there be struggles worse than death ; there's strife
 With them we love—who love us.—But, who e'er
 Loved us as Christ did love ? Whom doth my heart
 Adore with longing warmth as it adores
 That Lord who with his ring hath deigned t' espouse me ?
 [Re-enter THEODORA.
 How is 't with thee ? Thou 'rt deadly pale !

THEODORA.

My child,
 I've promised somewhat in thy name. Oh slay not
 Thine own true hand-maid with thy look's fixed stern-
 ness !

KATHARINA.

What hast thou done ? Say on.

THEODORA.

Forgive, sweet daughter,
 If, when thy father said " Unless she yield her
 Straightway to wed Porphyrius, she must perish,
 Since Gallus purposeth (except she give
 Such pledge of her obedience) to renew
 His search into her faith," I answered him
 Thou surely wouldst consent ! And from the dust
 I rise not till thou pardon me my daring,
 And tell me thou wilt live !

KATHARINA.

Thou know'st I 'm wedded ;
 And how. No man may own me !

THEODORA.

Thou didst dream
 That wedding !

KATHARINA (*showing her ring*).

Whence came this ?

THEODORA.

There is no space
 To argue of that mystery, but hearken
 Unto my prayer !

KATHARINA.

Rise—rise—my father's step
 Draws near. I would not he should see thee prostrate
 Before thy foster-child !

THEODORA.

See, I obey thee,
 [Enter LYCOPHRON.
 But make me not a liar in his sight !
 [KATHARINA turns away.

LYCOPHRON.

Daughter—thou hast not changed anew ?

KATHARINA.

I change not,
 Father.

LYCOPHRON (*glancing at THEODORA*).

And *she* spake truth ? Thou 'lt not deny me
 That which I ask of thee ; it is thy life !
 Since for thy dear life's sake I urge this marriage.

KATHARINA.

My lip can frame no word wherewith to utter
 Denial to my father's pray'r.

LYCOPHRON.

The blessing
 Of them that dwell on high be on thee, child !
 Thou tremblest, weepest—when thou hast o'ercome
 This passing sorrow, thou wilt thank the fate
 That forced thee from thy purpose. The third day
 From this must see thy nuptials.

KATHARINA.

The third day !
 'T is speedy !

LYCOPHRON.

True ; but Gallus bade me hasten
 The rite, if I would save thee.

KATHARINA (*aside*).

'T is because

Union with one who cleaves unto yon idols,
 Firmly as doth Porphyrius, shall make me
 Seem that I am not—nor can be. (*Aloud after a pause.*)

Permit'st thou,

Father, that I should commune presently
 With him to whom thou 'st giv'n me? I would tell him
 E'en now what bride he's like to find.

LYCOPHRON.

So wouldst thou?

Well—as thee lists. I should be slow to grant
 Thy wish, were 't not I know he so doth love thee,
 That all thy waywardness will not avail
 To scare him. I will seek and send thy bridegroom.

[*Exit* LYCOPHRON.]

KATHARINA.

He loves me, and therefore my hope 's the less;
 And yet, perchance, it therefore should be greater!
 The bridegroom of the Roman maid, Cecilia,
 Loved her, yet spared that she besought him spare—
 But him did God's especial grace convert
 Straight to that faith and knowledge, mine doth scorn!

Enter PORPHYRIUS.

PORPHYRIUS.

Thy father saith, that thou wouldst frighten me
 From tasting of the bliss he grants!

KATHARINA.

Porphyrius,

Abide thus far, while unto thee I say
 More than my father thinks on. Stand ye back,
 Hand-maidens—(*To* THEODORA) even thou! I would
 discourse

[THEODORA *retires into the background.*]

Unheard a while. And now I am—as 't were—
 Alone with thee, I know not how to speak
 The thing I would!

PORPHYRIUS.

Nor know I, Katharina,
 Whether to bid thee hasten, or delay,

Or keep for ever in thy soul the secret
Of that, whate'er it be, that in thy heart
Contentends against me !

KATHARINA.

I have said ere now
Another had my faith ; my maidenhead
Is vowed, devoted to our God ! The vestals
Of Rome may know no man, nor may thy bride.

PORPHYRIUS.

Oh ! vain and senseless vow ! But from such bond
A father's will may loose his child.

KATHARINA.

I would not
'T were loosed ; nor may it be.

PORPHYRIUS.

But they will slay thee,
Kath'rina, if thou wed me not !

KATHARINA.

And thou
So lov'st me, that there 's much thou 'dst do and bear
For my life's sake ?

PORPHYRIUS.

I 'd venture to endure
All peril and all pain to buy thy safety !

KATHARINA.

Nor pain nor peril would I have thee brave ;
But wouldst thou save the child of Lycophron,
Oh son of Hyparinus, from the doom
By the stern Roman passed on her, yet shun
The hate that in her soul would straightway kindle
Towards him who forced her from her vow's fulfilment,
Call me thy wife awhile—(since I have lacked
Valour to tell my father I will perish
Sooner than make me thine)—but—let the daughter
Of thy sire's friend in thee behold a brother !

PORPHYRIUS.

Mean'st thou that all the gladsome rites wherewith
They 'll celebrate our wedding, shall but mock me ?
That I shall hear the Hymenæan ring

Around, yea lay me on one couch beside thee,
Nor be indeed thy bridegroom? Know'st thou, maiden,
What thou dost ask?

KATHARINA.

I knew not verily
That I should wake such wrath! Oh! gaze not thus
On me, Porphyrius!

PORPHYRIUS.

I meant not, fair one,
T' affright thee; but though love have pierced me sore,
His might hath not so witched me, but I spurn
The mumm'ry wherein thou wouldst have me play
My part contentedly. I call not her
My wife, whose husband I 'm forbid to prove me!

KATHARINA.

'T is well.

PORPHYRIUS.

No—'t is *not* well!—thou fairest thing!
Thou dearest! Can I think upon the doom,
Wherefore thou 'rt arming thee, nor seek to bar
The steps of fate? Now hearken, and believe!
I *will* endure the pains of Tantalus
On that same night I deemed should equal me
Unto the gods for bliss, will wait the day
When thou, by my love warmed, at last shalt love me,
Ere I love's guerdon claim! Wilt thou now live,
And call thee mine, thou cruel one?

KATHARINA.

I thank thee,
My friend Porphyrius, that thus unrewarded,
Thou help'st me in my need—but ere I yield
Such boundless trust, an oath must curb thy soul.

PORPHYRIUS.

Such oath as lists thee, lay on me.

KATHARINA.

Swear not
By them who are no gods, but call the spirits
Of thy dead sire and mother to avenge
Thy perjury, if ever thou avail thee—

(I say not of my weakness and thy strength)
 But—of occasion, chance, or loneliness,
 Such as our seeming marriage may afford,
 To urge me unto that I must deny
 Life-long.

PORPHYRIUS.

Thou deal'st right hardly with thy captive.....
 Bind'st him in heavy chains—yet—if thus only
 Thou'lt save thee, even as thou wilt I 'll call
 Upon the dead.....No, Katharina.....No.....
 I may not call on them, for I were perjured !
 There 's many a youth.....(myself I was sore tempted)
 Would bind him with what words should please thee best,
 Then keep them as he could; trusting to love,
 And fortune for his pardon; but 'twixt thee
 And me 't is other. Never shalt thou say
 “ 'T was by his oath's foul breach Porphyrius won me!”

KATHARINA.

I understand now what that is men call
 By love's fair name.

PORPHYRIUS.

'T is in good truth less fine-spun
 Thou that whereof we 've read of old in Plato !
 Yet no less hath it wings, and soareth proudly,
 Lifting almost man's soul unto the height
 Of heaven! Wherefore it is, oh my beloved,
 I 'll sooner waste in longing, than enjoy
 Thy charms, and not thyself; the love I bear thee,
 Save through thine answer'ing love, can know no guerdon.
 Then fear not lest I snatch a grace bestowed
 With loathing; but to bind both lip and eye,
 That they forbear to woo thee, to forego
 The good kind fortune sends, when time and space
 Are granted wherein I may tell to thee
 Again and yet again of my true love
 While thou art at my side and called mine own.....
 By mine own deed to tear from out the branch
 Hope offers, the one bud may bloom to glad me.....
 Therein I may not bow unto thy pleasure!
 But, if thou rush on fate—I follow thee.

KATHARINA.

I say it not in anger; 't is in vain
Thou hop'st for love from me.

PORPHYRIUS.

And wherefore vain?
Thou 'st called me friend—thou hat'st me not—hast
told me
Thou lov'st no mortal man—and I believe thee.
Why should not love wake love? Or—were it other,
If thou couldst deem me Christian?

KATHARINA.

From my soul
I would, for thine own sake, I might so deem.
Yea, gladly would I shed my blood to buy
Thee and my father knowledge of our God!
Yet—wert thou Christian—I were none the more
Thy wife.

PORPHYRIUS.

The less temptation for thy lover
To pay dissembling worship. But thy words,
Though stern in sense, are softly breathed; methinks
Thou seest at last with what deep love I love thee!
Thou lift'st thine eyes to heav'n, and speakest not.
Oh, gentlest Katharina, I but seek
To teach *thee*, too, a knowledge thou dost lack—
Hast turned from till this day. For thy sweet sake
So will thy teacher rule him, that no haste,
No hot impatience, e'er shall stir the calm
Of thy serenest nature, till thyself
Shalt say, "Porphyrius, thou hast earned thy need!"
Such be our treaty, love! Oh! say not Nay!

KATHARINA.

I may say nothing! for my father comes;
(I see him from the court within approaching);
And I beseech thee, kind Porphyrius,
Tell not to him what I have dared to ask
Of thy forbearance!

PORPHYRIUS.

Not till I may tell him
That virtue's no more needed! Oh, thy blush,

Without thy frown, sufficeth to reprove
Light speech, and—thou wouldst say—rash hope.

Enter LYCOPHRON.

LYCOPHRON (*to PORPHYRIUS*).

Canst tame

The Thracian wild-colt? Or hath Katharina
Tamed thee, my son?

PORPHYRIUS.

She hath essayed; th' emprise
Is harder than she deemed; but she hath learnt
How far I'll guide me by her will; I, too,
Have guessed what I may hope.

LYCOPHRON.

Is't so, Kath'rina?

KATHARINA.

I know not for the last; but while I live,
I'll thank Porphyrius for that in plain speech
He's bared to me his heart; nor sought to smother
Or veil what dwells therein.

LYCOPHRON.

He were no son
Of Hyparinus, could he deal in guise
More pliant. (*Aside to PORPHYRIUS*) She hath found
in thee her master.

PORPHYRIUS (*aside to LYCOPHRON*).

So think'st thou?

LYCOPHRON (*to KATHARINA*).

Yes, 't is not from ev'ry tongue
Truth springs spontaneous, as from this thy bridegroom's!
I knew that thou must prize him; and the day
Will come, as I have said, when thou shalt hold it
Fair hap, that Gallus in his tyranny
Compelled thee to thy good.

KATHARINA.

It may be, father.

(*Aside*) Though that I deem my good is distant far
From what he so doth name.

LYCOPHRON.

Me seems, ye twain
 Have striv'n, and then made peace; lest ye anew
 Fall out, we'll leave thee, child, with Theodora,
 To talk o'er wreaths, and garments, and perfumes,
 As needs thou must (thy wedding-day so near),
 While I discourse on themes almost as grave
 With thee, my son Porphyrius.

PORPHYRIUS.

Katharina,
 There's peace indeed between us? If there be,
 Give me thy hand.

KATHARINA.

'T is thine, in token sure
 Of peace and friendship.

LYCOPHRON (*to* PORPHYRIUS).

Why, thou hast sped well!
 What can a maiden farther offer thee?

[*Exeunt* LYCOPHRON *and* PORPHYRIUS;
 THEODORA *and the two damsels remain*
in the background.]

KATHARINA.

My silence hath deceived them! Shame on thee,
 Faint-hearted Katharina! How shall I
 Keep true unto my vow, and to the love
 That warms my soul for my celestial Lord,
 Who dare not tell the truth unto my sire,
 As unto me the Pagan youth hath told it?
 How shall I strive against both sire and lover,
 When that which they call marriage shall have bound
 me,
 Since, yet unbound, I lack the strength to brave them?
 'Gainst the Proconsul on his judgment-seat
 To th' death I could have fought!—and would! The
 sterner
 His bearing grew, the bolder waxed my spirit;
 Not so with these; I have nor heart nor tongue
 To deal or with the old man or the youth.
 The tears stream down my cheeks while I deny them

What they esteem but duty. Were I hence !
 Or in the grave, or in the grave-like desert,
 Where fain I'd hide me from the sight of men,
 Until that blessed hour when God's high will
 Shall free me from earth's coil, yea, shall array me
 For my true wedding ! I must bide His time
 In whose hand are the issues of our life
 And death. Yet flight might save me from the peril
 That threatens me now ! Flight whither ? Mid the rocks
 And sands of the wild Thebais, there be those
 Would feed me till such time as I had learnt
 Myself to seek and find the homely fare,
 May well suffice for one who ever looked
 For sustenance of body and of soul
 To other bread than earth's. (*To THEODORA, after a
 pause*) Saidst thou, Theodora,
 That Aleimus, who to the wilderness
 Had fled in fear of Gallus, yesternight
 Returned into this city ?

THEODORA (*coming forward*).

Hush ! speak low,
 My child ! I saw him ere the dawn this day,
 Before our porch ; in secret he returned,
 Once more to see his brother, who departed
 At noon upon his voyage to the East ;
 To-night our friend glides back to whence he came.

KATHARINA.

Whose dwelling hides him now ?

THEODORA.

The house of Philo ;
 Ever, as thou dost know, a refuge sure
 For them our faith hath perilled. God in mercy
 Grant to the holy man that he go forth
 Unknown, unwatched, for little were the ruth
 He'd find in the Proconsul.

KATHARINA.

I believe thee ;
 And with thee for his safety pray. The roof
 Of Philo shelters him ?

THEODORA.

So he did tell me.

When he, disguised, stole hither ere the sunrise,
To hear how fared his pupil.

KATHARINA.

And thou told'st him

She yet was true?

THEODORA.

Most surely.

KATHARINA.

But thou saidst not

That she was plighted to a heathen youth?

THEODORA.

Not plighted;—no—I said but that thy father
Desired such marriage.

KATHARINA.

Fetch me, Theodora,

That volume of the Scriptures which the sage
And martyr, who, ere at the feet I sat
Of this same Alcimus, instructed me.

There's somewhat I would read while yet there's
sunlight.

[*Exit* THEODORA.]

I've heard that worldly men, in desp'rate doubt
Of that their path should be, have questioned Fate
By op'ning of a poet's page, receiving
As answer the first verse whereon their eye
Glanced, as the book at hazard was unclosed;
And such an oracle, 't is said, availed them
Full oft. I pray thee, oh my God, reply
Thou in like fashion to thy suppliant,
Who, doubtful, hopeless of all earthly aid,
Seeks in Thy holy word for light and counsel.
Here to abide is ill—to fly from forth

My father's house, 't is daring. [*Enter* THEODORA *with*
a book.] Thanks, Theodora!

[*THEODORA retires to the background after*
delivering the book; KATHARINA sits
down and opens it at hazard.

'T is even as I thought! It telleth me
How Moses fled into the wilderness,
And there abode till God had called him thence.
This page hath banished me! Lo, I obey
Thy voice, Almighty One, thus silently
Thy sov'reign will unto my soul declaring.

Maidens, I will not keep you from your loom
Or distaff in the court below. [*Exeunt Slave-girls.*

Theodora,
[*KATHARINA rises.*

I pray thee, my beloved one, leave thy child
Awhile this evening to that loneliness
Wherein she feels her least alone. If later
Thou find this place untenanted, seek not
My chamber, nurse. At dawning 't will be time
T' uncloset its door. Good night !

THEODORA.

Thou art bowed down
With heavy sorrow, dear one !

KATHARINA.

I have cause
Therefore. But God can help, and in fit time
Will help. Good night again, kind Theodora !

THEODORA.

Must I depart ? [*KATHARINA bows her head assentingly.*
Well, God be with thee, daughter !
[*Exit THEODORA.*

KATHARINA.

Yea, He is with me ! else I had not steeled
My soul to tear me from each living thing
I've known and prized ! She is too frail of frame,
Ay, and too weak in faith my flight to share ;
So must I leave her safe in ignorance
Of that she'll learn too soon. Farewell, thou home
Of me and of my race ! The caves and clefts
Of barren mountains, on the sultry verge
Of Afric's boundless waste, must shelter me.
No more, oh father—but all earthly love,
The holiest e'en—all earthly joy, the purest—
Must vanish. Heav'nly love and joy abide.
Thus from my sire and mine ancestral halls
I go ; nor heed the pang, so I but save
My consecrated maidhood—so I keep
Unplucked the rose which I would wear that morn
When I shall deck me for my heav'nly bridal !

ACT III.

SCENE I. *The Interior of a Cave in the desert country at some distance from Alexandria.* KATHARINA is seated on a stone, and leans against the rocky wall of the cavern. ALCIMUS stands beside her.

ALCIMUS.

Thy strength hath failed thee, maiden ; and thy limbs,
If forced to bear thee onward 'mid the blaze
Of noon, would sink upon the burning sand,
Long ere we'd crossed the space that yet divides us
From the lone bourne of this day's toil and travel,
The catacomb, where good Eudemus offers
Rest to the weary, to the fugitive
A hiding-place, yet secret from pursuers.

KATHARINA.

Had I but wings as hath the dove ! to fly
Far from all dread alike of friend and foeman,
Beyond these wastes ! Methinks I yet have strength
Will speed me tow'rds that safe and peaceful vault,
Wherein of old the mighty dead lay shrouded,
And now the living hide them !

ALCIMUS.

Katharina,

Thy frame obeys not thy brave spirit's 'hest ;
Almost to earth thou fall'st as thou wouldst rise ;
'T were better stretch thee on this rocky couch,
Till slumber cure thy weariness, and bring thee
Back the brisk step wherewith thou didst set forth
At dawning.

KATHARINA.

Nay but father, if they tracked us
Or e'er we reached that tomb ?

ALCIMUS.

I rather fear,
 Daughter, lest thy pursuers (if pursued
 Thou be) should light on thee, while slowly lagging
 Through the wide wilderness, than sheltered here,
 Within this low-roofed cave, the mouth whereof
 By yonder sand-hill guarded, to no eye
 Reveals itself, save theirs to whom the desert
 Is as a home. A host might pass thee by,
 Nor guess that thou lay'st near ! Nay, more, if chance
 Or treach'ry brought a hunter on thy traces,
 Seest thou, there, eastward, lies (invisible
 (To all but one who's taught where he should seek it)
 An issue, whence a pathway in the rock,
 Hewn in old time, ascends unto its outlet
 Still farther from all haunts of men, beneath
 That stony ridge whereon I bade thee fix
 Thine eye, as bound'ry of the Lybian waste.

[ALCIMUS assists KATHARINA to rise, and
 leading her to the farthest and darkest
 corner of the cavern, makes her aware
 of the precise position of the second outlet,
 which is concealed at once by the darkness
 and by a portion of projecting rock.

KATHARINA (*returning slowly towards the mouth of the
 cave*).

We should be safe ; and gladly would I rest.
 Thou wilt watch near me, father ?

ALCIMUS.

Near thee, child,
 Will I remain, but not within this cavern.
 Without I'll sit, beneath the tall rock's shadow,
 Until it lengthen as the sun sinks down ;
 Then will I call thee, maiden, to resume
 Thy march. Fear not for me ; a wayfarer
 Of lowliest race, in garb and hue I seem,
 Such as do traverse oft this wilderness
 With scrip and staff ; there's none who thus alone
 Will heed me : by thy side, 't were other, maiden.

KATHARINA.

Go then; a heavy sleep o'erpow'rs my being;
 Pray thou the while for me! Myself I pray
 That mine eternal Lord may ward all evil
 From this my lonely refuge. Fold thy wings
 Around me, Blessed One, and here I'm safer
 Than e'er in guarded tow'r slept royal maid.

[KATHARINA stretches herself on the ground
 at some little distance from the mouth of
 the cave.

ALCIMUS.

Yes, lay thee in yon nook; e'en one who found
 This cavern's entrance scarce would thence perceive
 thee.

Farewell a while; sleep sweetly. She hath closed
 Her eyes already! God restore in time
 The strength she needs to carry her, ere midnight,
 Unto her desert home. But—can it be?
 I hear a faint and far-off trumpet-sound—
 Or hath mine ear deceived me? She did tremble
 Lest Gallus should send soldiers on her footsteps,
 And feared to bring ill luck on me! I care not
 So she but 'scape. I will go forth and hearken
 In the free air again; but be they near
 Or far, no safer nest could screen the bird
 They seek, than this where now I have bestowed her.
 Anew methinks I heard—or is it only
 Some wild-bird's cry? Or can the desert breeze,
 Winding through clefts and crannies, imitate
 The warlike blast? I'll climb the ruined watch-tow'r,
 To mark if aught upon th' horizon shine
 Like gleam of weapons.

(Looking towards KATHARINA) Once again, God guard
 thee! [Exit ALCIMUS.

*Voices of unseen Spirits sing the following verses during
 KATHARINA'S sleep.*

With locks unwreathed, in dust-soiled garments dight,
 Maiden, thou lay'st thee down;

The while on high they weave thy garments white,
 Thine amaranthine crown !
 Sleep ! for the way was long, and thou shalt wake
 Anew to strife and woe !
 Sleep ! for in slumber doth the soul forsake
 Awhile her chains below.
 While lasts thine hour of rest, invisibly
 Our watch we keep o'er thy repose and thee !
 Thy pray'r is heard, an angel's wing
 Above thee floats ! no evil thing
 Hath pow'r to harm the maid whose trust
 Did never cleave to mortal dust ;
 For help celestial shall disarm
 Both tyrant force, and tempting charm.

The pow'rs of earth are pressing nigh,
 Thy heart with fiery proof to try ;
 But thou, whose love hath found on high
 An all unworldly destiny,
 With steadfast will, with peaceful sense,
 Victorious in thine innocence,
 Nor fear'st nor feel'st the glowing might
 That in thy soul with God would fight.

The fairest of the lying train,
 That o'er man's race as gods did reign,
 The winged boy with dart and torch
 Thine ice-cold breast full fain would scorch ;
 The heav'nly knot full fain would sever,
 That binds thee to thy Lord for ever ;
 But all in vain that archer's skill
 'Gainst hearts which love like thine doth fill !

[*As the voices die away, PORPHYRIUS enters, without at first perceiving KATHARINA; he seats himself on the same stone on which she was discovered at the opening of the scene.*

PORPHYRIUS.

Oh whither hath she fled ? Because forsooth
 'T is noon, and something sultry, the base guides
 Who pilot us along this sea of sand,
 Must rest them in the shade ! I could have scourged

The lazy knaves! but, save from them, how learn
 The way may lead me yet to my beloved?
 If that be true that Theodora told us
 When urged by Lycophron, 't is like she bends
 Her course towards those subterranean cells,
 Where slink in fear of justice and of law
 The vot'ries of her God. 'T is true, the household
 Of Philo hath denied all sight and knowledge
 Of her we seek; but 't is confessed, that dotard
 (Of whom her nurse did speak) crept secretly
 Ere dawning from the city; and a woman
 Close-veiled went forth with him. There are who say
 "I seek for what were little worth the finding;"
 Who tell me "that ethereal maid, too pure
 For marriage ties, is flown to meet a lover,
 Of birth and fortunes base alike." I heed not
 Such envious talk! the child of Lycophron
 To a rash deed by madness may be warped;
 By wanton will was never moved. To shun
 That she doth hold for sacrilege, she flies me.
 Why scrupled I to win her with fair falsehood?
 Since, once compelled her self-framed vow to break,
 The vision of her marriage with a god
 Must leave her soul, which then such love would know,
 As needs must make my bliss, and her's withal!
 Her kinsmen well may call me fool—faint-hearted,
 Who, witch'd by that sweet sophist, and aspiring
 To bear me worthy her, too strictly clung
 To truth, for my undoing—yea, and her's!
 So shall it not be now, by all the gods!
 Where'er I light on thee, thy pride I brave—
 Ay, and thy pray'rs and tears oh Katharina!

[He rises from his seat.]

Yet whereto serves the valour that but wakens
 When the foe flies? Shall I again behold thee?
 On earth and heav'n in vain I call! Restore
 My bride unto my sight! Can ye not hear
 The cry my soul sends forth? I fain would pierce
 These rocks with lamentations that should ring
 Through the wide waste, till on thine ear they smote,
 Repeating still, "Why fledst thou, Katharina?"

KATHARINA (*without opening her eyes*).

Who named my name?

PORPHYRIUS.

What murmured sound thrills through
The stillness of this spot? Or hath it been
The echo of my voice?

KATHARINA (*her eyes still closed*).

They flung on me
White roses as I slept, then lulled mine ear
With songs so passing sweet!

PORPHYRIUS (*advancing farther into the cave*).

A woman lies
Upon the stony floor! 'T is thou, Kath'rina!

KATHARINA (*starting, and half rising*).

Who taught thee thy way hither?

PORPHYRIUS.

It was love!
The mightiest of the gods! no mortal guided
My steps. But I have found thee! and this time
Thou 'scap'st me not.

KATHARINA.

Loose—loose thy hold, Porphyrius!

PORPHYRIUS.

No—thou wouldst fly anew, and leave me here
In hopeless loneliness; thou go'st not hence
Till thou with me, as mine, walk'st forth! Thy fate
Doth will it; and the gods of love and marriage
Have giv'n this cavern in the wilderness
To be our bridal chamber!

KATHARINA (*struggling to free herself*).

Wouldst thou shame
The daughter of thy host?

PORPHYRIUS.

It shames thee not
To make thee one with him thy father calls
E'en now thy husband.

KATHARINA.

Yet do I entreat thee
To spare, through mercy—ay, through love—the maid
Who at thy feet implores thee that thou take not
That which she may not yield !

PORPHYRIUS (*aside*).

I fain would stop

Mine ears !

(*Aloud*) Thou didst repay me ill, Kath'rina,
When yesterday I hearkened to thee ; wherefore
The time's gone by when thou couldst cheat and mock
Thy bridegroom with sweet words. Strive not.

[*As KATHARINA again struggles to free herself, a flash of fire shoots from her left hand, momentarily illuminating the cave. PORPHYRIUS starts back, releasing her in his amazement.*

Whence came
That spark that lightened in mine eyes ?

KATHARINA.

I know not.

PORPHYRIUS.

It glowed upon thy finger, as thy hand
Rose heav'nward !

KATHARINA.

From the ring of my betrothment,
I well believe (and thank my God therefore !)
Hath fire flashed forth, to warn thee that thou touch not
The bride of Christ.

PORPHYRIUS.

What may I deem ? Is 't witchcraft
Whereby thou 'dst foil me ? or, art verily
Espoused to one on high ? Of magic might

I take small heed, albeit with seeming terrors
It fence thee round; yet, could it be, thy madness
(As I have ever held it) were but truth?

KATHARINA.

Ere now hath truth been counted foolishness;
Of sorcery I'm guiltless.

PORPHYRIUS.

Would I knew
What 't is I should believe!

KATHARINA.

Believe the truth,
Porphyrius!

PORPHYRIUS.

Whatsoe'er that truth thou speak'st of,
An awful glory circleth thee around,
That blights my daring. I've but made of thee
A deadlier foe than erst!

KATHARINA.

Thine enemy
I am not, so thou 'bid'st thus far—no nearer!

PORPHYRIUS.

Fear me not! Thy soft hands could chain me! Seest not,
'T is I dread *thee*!

KATHARINA.

If thou so dread my wrath,
Depart from me.

PORPHYRIUS.

And leave thee here, to dwell
In lurking holes of this drear wilderness?
Not so! thy father, whom the will of Gallus
In his own house imprisons, bade me lead thee
(If the gods blessed my search) to distant Saïs,
Unto thy kindred in that ancient city,
Since in his home he may not welcome thee.
Wherefore, so soon as falls the evening shadow,
With me must thou set forth.

KATHARINA.

With thee ! my father
Knew not what guide he gave me !

PORPHYRIUS.

I have bid thee
Fear me no more.

KATHARINA.

Were this the lion's lair,
Sooner I 'd keep its shelter than roam o'er
Those wastes with thee.

PORPHYRIUS.

Thou trust'st me not ! I 've earned me
The punishment ; yet mark me, Katharina,
'T were better trust whom thou might'st ill defy !
Lo, I have ruled me—ay, will rule me yet,
But think not I 'll depart. 'T is well for thee,
Yes, well (for all thy magic ring's strange fire)
'T was *I* who tracked thee, and no hound of Gallus !

KATHARINA.

Doth the Proconsul hunt for me ?

PORPHYRIUS.

He 's sworn
That thou ere set of sun shalt learn how far
The arm of Rome can stretch ; methought that mine,
With love to nerve it, could yet farther reach,
And swifter ; and I erred not, for I found thee !

KATHARINA.

Fain would I trust !

PORPHYRIUS.

Who trusts, doth bind her lover !
Now hearken, Katharina. Till the hour
Be passed, which for their rest our guides have claimed,
Here, in the cavern's mouth I 'll sit, nor ask
For word or look from thee. But seek thou not
To strive 'gainst fate, when I shall bid thee rise
To travel unto Saïs in my guidance.

KATHARINA.

If such thy will, small pow'r have I to strive.

[PORPHYRIUS *places himself near the entrance of the cavern, only occasionally watching KATHARINA, who seats herself on a stone at some distance, and rather behind him.*

He bids me trust him ! And I well believe
That his intent is fair ; but scarce can he
(E'en now that he hath torn him hence) rein in
The fierceness of that longing that consumes him.
It flashes in his glance—in vain he 'd force
His restless frame to stillness. He holds not
'T is sin to seize what for his right he counts,
And spares me but awhile, in hope to win
By free consent that he by force had ta'en,
Save that a wondrous sign from his bold purpose
Did fright him. [She glances towards PORPHYRIUS.

But already he repenteth

Of that he deems his weakness. Gazed he not
As though hell's fire shot through him, when he spake
Of my mistrust, and said "'T were ill for me
To brave him ?" He doth hold the miracle
For sore'ry, which to spurn, were manly daring,
Not sacrilege ; a moment may recall
His boldness and my peril !.....He hath turned
His eyes from mine, as though by strong compulsion :
His hands are folded o'er them. If I crept
Forth through that eastern op'ning, Alcimus
Did show me ! Stealing through it 's farther mouth
I 'd seek that holy man, whom if I found not,
And perished in the waste, still should my vow
Be kept, and I, beneath the drifted sand,
Should lie a stainless bride ! Our Lord can guard
His own, as me He 's guarded to this hour ;
Yet He forbiddeth not—nay He commandeth—
To flee from danger, nor despise the door
Of safety chance doth open.

[She rises cautiously, unseen by PORPHYRIUS.

Though the bands

Of Gallus, as he said, be on my track,
They scarce as yet have reached thus far, nor know they
The mazes of these rocks. Once more hath he

Looked on me ! Now he's leaned his brow anew
 Upon the stone.....whate'er betide, I'll 'scape
 From him who sought unhallowed touch to lay
 Upon Thy spouse, dear Lord ! May my foot's tread
 Fall noiseless, as tow'rds yonder cleft I glide !
 And thou, who still hath guided, guide me now
 Through subterraneous darkness to the light,
 That.....if my doom be death.....at least I breathe
 My life away beneath the golden sun !

[KATHARINA *disappears*.]

Voice from without, near the entrance.

We wait thee, master !

PORPHYRIUS (*starting to his feet*).

I have better sped
 Than I did hope ; and tow'rds another point
 I now must bid ye lead me. Katharina !
 The time hath come !—where art thou ?

(*Looking round*) Hath she fled
 Anew ?—but 't is impossible ! I sat
 Here at the cave's sole mouth ! Where hast thou hid thee,
 Mine own one ? My betrothed ? By all the gods,
 Yea, by thy own sweet self, thy fear doth wrong me !

Enter NICANOR, Guides, and Attendants.

NICANOR.

What seek'st thou, friend ?

PORPHYRIUS.

Her whom I'd found ; Kath'rina !

NICANOR.

Thou found'st her ?

PORPHYRIUS.

Ay, and spake with her, 't is scarce
 Three minutes since.

NICANOR (*aside*).

He raves ! (*Aloud*) If here thou saw'st her,
 Here should we too behold her ; through the hard
 And close-compacted sides of this low vault
 How should she shape her way ?

PORPHYRIUS.

Or into air
By magic art she 's melted, or hath sunk
Into earth's centre, but to fly from me !
She 's nigh ; perchance she hears. Art thou so ruthless
That for a moment's rashness thou condemn'st me
To torture endless as Ixion's doom ?
I move not hence ! this cave shall be my dwelling
Or else my tomb.
(*To NICANOR and the others*) To you my speech doth seem
Stark madness ; yet I found her.

NICANOR.

It may be ;
But if she own the pow'r from mortal sight
To vanish, yet stand heark'ning by, 't is like
Her art may teach her through the granite's veins
To thread her way ; wherefore 't were sooner giv'n thee
Without to light on her.

PORPHYRIUS.

I know not ; scarce
I reck. [*A distant trumpet sounds.*]
Whence swelled that blast ?

NICANOR.

The trumpet-call
Of Rome I hear. Thou knewest the Proconsul
Was wending his way hither ?

PORPHYRIUS.

'T was his purpose,
I knew ; but.....

NICANOR.

'Twixt th' intent and deed of Gallus
There 's small delay ; and if my kinsman's child
Indeed be nigh, she will have need, be sure,
Of all such magic sleights as she can wield,
To 'scape his horsemen.

PORPHYRIUS.

Then I would she lingered
Yet in this den—if here thou be, Kath'rina,

Abide ! But with thee I 'll go forth, Nicanor,
 To learn if yonder Roman's murd'rous quest
 For her we seek, have more than mine availed him !
 [*Exeunt PORPHYRIUS, NICANOR, Guides and Slaves.*]

SCENE II. *The Desert. Soldiers halting, ALCIMUS
 bound and guarded. A tent in the background.*

Enter PORPHYRIUS, NICANOR, Guides and Slaves.

NICANOR (*to a Soldier.*)

You 're marching southward, friends ?

SOLDIER.

Not now ; I thank
 The gods we 're homeward bound ! The game we sought
 Hath fall'n into our net.

NICANOR (*indicating ALCIMUS.*)

Mean 'st thou that greybeard ?

SOLDIER.

Ah, him we sought not ; but he 's one we 've toiled
 To find ere now ; one of that sect accurst
 Whose impious scorn of gods and men hath drawn
 Ill luck upon our empire ; he had 'scaped us
 Anew—(for as I said, we sought him not,
 Although hard by),—were 't not he needs must rush
 Out from his hiding-place at sound of cries
 From one he could not help.

PORPHYRIUS.

Who called on him ?

SOLDIER.

Even that Christian damsel who hath fled
 Her home in Alexandria.

PORPHYRIUS.

Ye seized not

Lycophron's daughter ?

SOLDIER.

Chafe not so, young stranger ;
 The maid 's unharmed ; ay, and may safe abide—

Against the empire's law, could in this space
With all fair rites be solemnized?

GALLUS.

I know not
About "fair rites" and banquets; but I know
That, were all willing, she had been thy wife
Ere now, Porphyrius.

PORPHYRIUS.

And my wife I hold her!

GALLUS.

She holds not thee her husband! Answer, maiden,
If his thou art?

NICANOR (*aside to KATHARINA*).

Nay, *say* thou 'rt his, Katharina!

KATHARINA.

How may I say what is not?

GALLUS.

Hast thou even

Betrothed thee unto him?

KATHARINA.

My father bade me

Hold me his bride.

GALLUS.

I speak not of thy father!

(*To PORPHYRIUS*) This marriage ne'er hath been, and
ne'er will be;

So much the damsel hath averred already.

Wherefore she must abide her judgment. (*To the soldiers*)

Bring ye

The litter shall convey her.

[PORPHYRIUS *draws near* KATHARINA,
while GALLUS *is kept in conversation with*
NICANOR *and* ARCHIPPUS.

PORPHYRIUS.

Would I 'd dealt

With thee in other guise!

KATHARINA.

Repent thou not

That thou wert merciful!

PORPHYRIUS.

How not repent
Of that which perils thee? Thou knowest surely
Wherein doth end that judgment?

KATHARINA.

Yea, full well,

PORPHYRIUS.

And thou hadst 'scaped it, if less woman-like
I'd borne me! Thou must needs have called thee mine;
And from his word, giv'n in the market-place,
He there (*Looking towards GALLUS*) could scarce go
back. Nay, I had led thee,
Ere now, half-way to Saïs, from the line
That these did tread, far off.

KATHARINA.

And unto Saïs

It may be I had gone, as bade my father,
Were 't not thou searedst me.

PORPHYRIUS.

And thou bought'st thy safety—
From fear I swore was vain—with risk of life!
Couldst thou not trust *his* faith, who, for thy love
E'en then had fettered the rebellious might
Within him?

KATHARINA.

I did err; for on my God
E'en in that trance of dread I should have leaned
With firmer trust.

PORPHYRIUS.

Yea, thou *didst* err, Kath'rina!
For as a brother I had guided thee
By night and day till in thy kindred's home
Thou found'st thy rest! Thou wrong'dst me, Katharina;
Ay, and thyself, who, sooner than to mine,
Into yon Roman's ruthless hands hast giv'n thee!

GALLUS (*breaking off from NICANOR and ARCHIPPUS*).

It may not be; too much to these respects
Of birth, and sex, and breeding have I yielded;

'T is proved that none can guide her; least of all
 This would-be bridegroom. (*To PORPHYRIUS*) From
 the prisoner
 Thou must draw back; ye hold no farther converse.

PORPHYRIUS.

Who dares forbid?

GALLUS.

The majesty of Rome.

PORPHYRIUS.

Enforced by thee, and these? (*indicating the Soldiers*).

NICANOR *and* ARCHIPPUS.

Hush—hold!

KATHARINA.

Porphyrius,

I pray thee, for that love whereof thou 'st giv'n me
 More than aught earthly's worth, from fruitless wrath
 Refrain, nor strive with might by God permitted.
 Farewell.

GALLUS.

A madman's safe with me.

KATHARINA.

I crave

One moment's license, of that aged man
 (Whom I have cost right dear) to ask his blessing.
 [*GALLUS signs to his Soldiers to permit her.*]

ALCIMUS.

'T is thine, my daughter. God on thee bestow
 Strength for thy trial!

KATHARINA.

And thou pardonest

The ill I've brought on thee?

ALCIMUS.

As ill I count not

What's dealt us for good deeds.

KATHARINA.

For these kind words
 I thank thee. (*To PORPHYRIUS*) Unto thee once more
 Farewell,
 Son of my father's friend !

[*KATHARINA enters the litter prepared for her, and is carried out attended by Soldiers.*]

ALCIMUS (*to PORPHYRIUS*).

Art thou the youth
 Who loves the child of Lycophron ?

PORPHYRIUS.

It skills not
 If I do love or hate a maid who guerdons
 Her foes and friends alike. But thou, old man,
 Taught'st thou to her the faith accurst, wherefore
 She ventures her dear life ?

ALCIMUS.

Another sowed
 The holy seed within her heart ; *I* tended
 Awhile its growth, and I did hither guide
 Her steps, when from her home she fled.

PORPHYRIUS.

Thou boastest
 Thereof, as though 't were virtue ! Never fell
 Th' avenging axe on guiltier head ! But whereto
 Shall serve thy righteous doom ! For Katharina
 It buys not life.

ALCIMUS.

Too truly speak'st thou, son
 Of Hyparinus ; and too well do I
 Remember my own youth to chide thy heat.
 Yet time shall come—nor far the day—when thou
 Shalt hold for thy best bliss what now thou cursest.

PORPHYRIUS.

What means he ? But one madness doth possess
 Teacher and pupil of their sect.

[*Exit ALCIMUS guarded, followed by GAL-
 LUS and his whole train, save ARCHIP-
 PUS, who lingers behind.*]

ARCHIPPUS.

Say, whither
 Wilt thou betake thee now, Porphyrius,
 Since that, wherefore thou left'st thy home in Antioch
 Is lost? and thou wouldst but abide to share
 The mourning of the house of Lycophron?

PORPHYRIUS.

Where'er I be, henceforth I mourn for ever;
 While Katharina lives, the air she breathes
 I too would breathe! and when they 've slain my love,
 Still will your city's earth contain her dust.
 Speed homeward—and I follow. Tell her sire
 That if he yet do hold me for his guest,
 By nightfall I will greet him.

[*Exeunt* NICANOR and ARCHIPPUS.]

Then will I
 Bid him avenge her! though I fain would hide
 From Lycophron what from myself I hide not.
 'T is I have slain thee, mine own love! 'T is I,
 Whose hot desire did drive thee from thy refuge!
 In blood would I atone—but vain alike
 Are vengeance and repentance to set free
 Her, whom my deeds have made the thrall of Gallus!
 Once more must I behold her—hoped I not
 Therefore, this sand were with my heart's stream
 crimsoned!

How works one moment's act to rear a pile
 Of woes that crush out life! And I have called me
 Wise, yea, and stedfast! Now were I content
 Almost to call me Christian—so I won me
 A portion in thy fate and in thine urn,
 Thou fairest of earth's daughters, and thou holiest!

ACT IV.

SCENE I. *The Inner Court of the Proconsul's Palace in Alexandria. An altar with fire burning on it stands in the centre of the Court before a statue of Jupiter. A guard of Soldiers is in attendance. NICANOR and ARCHIPPUS stand in front.*

NICANOR.

Thou shouldst know somewhat of his mind; he grants thee
More of his ear than unto most.

ARCHIPPUS.

His ear!

Yea, truly, he doth oftentimes lend it me;
But if thou deem'st he therefore into mine
Doth pour his thought, thou err'st.

NICANOR.

Yet thoughts unspoken
Are ever and anon, through look, and mien,
And circumstance, revealed to him who stands
Thus ever near, and hath both eye and wit
Wherewith to mark and learn. Canst frame no guess
Whether his purpose be, to th' uttermost
To execute the doom her folly's wrought her,
Or whether—'spite stern words—he do but mean
Somewhat to bow her pride and damp her zeal,
With strict imprisonment, the weariness
Whereof hath oft worn down more steadfast souls
Than this young Katharina's.

ARCHIPPUS.

Hark thee, friend,
'T is doubtful, as me seemeth, if within
His own close bosom Gallus have determined
To push her to her fate, or to relax
The rig'rous question and command he's threatened.

A fantasy came o'er me—(tell it not
To Lycophron !)—as though our grave Proconsul
Had cast an eye that spake not of sheer wrath
Upon the maid.

NICANOR.

That were a boldness passing
What Romans and Proconsuls yet have shown us !
A damsel of our house !

ARCHIPPUS.

Why—true it is,
'T would somewhat drain his coffers to restore
Unto his wife in Rome her wealthy dow'ry ;
Yet might he take that venture, if he thought
Thereafter to espouse th' inheritance
Of Lycophron (were such fair lot unsullied
By taint of Christian errors, which nor wealth
Nor birth can e'er gloss over). It may be
That I have but imagined this, whereof
I talk to thee, old friend ; still—on that day
He stopped her flight, as we approached this city
Bringing her captive hitherward, he bade me
Draw near her litter, and strive once again
To purge the madness from her soul, declaring
How bare of glory is this death she courts,
How vain, how aimless ; urging therewithal
The praise she'd win, if wisely she disowned,
The doctrines of that sect, philosophy
Abhorreth ; yea, the lordly path would open
Before her, through alliance nobler far
And mightier than her father had designed.
All this I said.

NICANOR.

And what replied Kath'rina ?

ARCHIPPUS.

That what *I* held for error was the truth ;
And, for the rest, if she with mortal man
Could wed, her father's pledge would she redeem,
Joining her with Porphyrius. Unto Gallus
I told her answer ; first he knit his brow,

Then smiled a bitter smile, and said "she flings
Her last chance from her." True, the man were moon-
struck,

Who took such maid to wife, albeit she's fair.
'T is pity of her! but the dungeon-gloom
Some space endured, perchance may teach her more
Than all the talk we've wasted. If it fail,
As much I'm doomed to sentence her, as she
'T abide my sentence." Thus he spake, 't is now
Full four days since; nor hath he from that hour
Made mention of the damsel, save to tell me,
That he admits none other of the kindred
And friends of Katharina, but thyself
And Lyeophron, to hear this day her answer
Unto the accusation.

NICANOR.

He doth take
Strange pow'rs on him! but that's naught new.

ARCHIPPUS.

A hearing

Giv'n in his house (and giv'n through grace, to spare
Thy kinsman's pride) by other laws is guided
Than is a trial in the market-place;
And he may deem 't is his to elose or open
His gate to whom he will. (*Enter GALLUS.*) He comes!
[*GALLUS seats himself on his tribunal, after
giving his hand to ARCHIPPUS and to*
NICANOR.

GALLUS.

I greet ye,

My friends. A heavy task to-day is mine,
Nicanor, if this maiden have not learnt
Some wisdom; but there's many a one (I hold)
Who in the market-place through sight and sound
Of wond'ring throngs, is buoyed up to abide
By some wild doctrine or rebellious axiom,
Yet straight would yield it up, or into naught
Explain it, were none hearers but the few
Unswayed by novelty. (*To NICANOR*) Thy kinswoman

Can count on no applause of heart or tongue
 To rash discourse (though friendly be her judges)
 Within these gates ; and therefore, well I hope,
 She 'll bend her.—But there cometh Lycophron,
 And there his daughter.

(*Enter LYCOPHRON on one side ; on the other a covered litter is borne in, from which KATHARINA descends, while NICANOR and ARCHIPPUS approach LYCOPHRON, and conduct him to a seat near that of GALLUS.*)

Would that she might bear her
 In guise that should permit me to restore
 The child unto the father !

KATHARINA (*as to herself*).

Scarce mine eyes,
 Used to the prison's darkness, and the shade
 Of the close litter, can endure the glare
 Of sunlight ; yet I welcome its bright radiance,
 And breathe with thanks to God the air's fresh
 sweetness !

(*Catching sight of LYCOPHRON on the opposite side*) Who
 sits beside my judges ? (*Aloud*) Father, grant
 Pardon unto thy child, who should have borne
 Thy wrath—not fled from it.

LYCOPHRON.

I pardon thee
 For all wherein 'gainst me thou 'st erred ; against
 Thyself are thy worst errors, whence I pray
 The gods may yet recall thee !

GALLUS.

Katharina,
 Daughter of Lycophron, five days have passed
 Since thou, in hearing of these citizens,
 And mine, avow'dst that in the Christian lore
 Thou didst instruct thine uncle's freedman, braving
 Th' imperial edicts by thine act. If thereof
 Thou now repent thee, and by worshipping
 Thy country's gods, wilt prove thyself reclaimed
 From thy delusion, well—[KATHARINA *stands motionless*.
 I pause to hear

Thine answer ; still no word ? I bid thee now
Tell me and these, art Christian, Katharina ?

KATHARINA.

I thank my Lord, that in His holy name
I was baptized, who died for me ; wherefore
Thereby I call me, and must call me ever.

LYCOPHRON.

The words are spoken, and she dies !

GALLUS.

'T is giv'n thee
With casting of that incense on yon flame
To show thee penitent.

KATHARINA.

I but repent
That I was slow to make my faith's confession ?

GALLUS.

Since thus thou scorn'st our clemency, the doom
Which thine impiety and thy rebellion
Against the gods and Cæsar bring on thee,
Is death ; such death as, witnessed, shall engrave
On each beholder's soul in lines of dread
The punishment by justice claimed for crimes
Against th' immortals. By the tort'ring wheels
New wrought of late, to be the penalty
Of deeds like thine, in three days' space thou diest,
If ere that term thou bow not at Jove's altar.

KATHARINA.

So help me my Redeemer and my Lord,
As best I may, the tortures I'll endure ;
For death—it will be welcome.

LYCOPHRON.

Hailest thou
The fate that shall bereave me ? Thankless child !

KATHARINA.

Not thankless, no ! But it may be, my Father,
More than my life, my death may profit thee.

LYCOPHRON.

How may that be? I pray thee, Gallus, call thou
Thy lictors back some space, that I may speak
One last word to my daughter.

*[The Guards retire at a sign from GALLUS,
leaving KATHARINA free to converse with
her Father, while NICANOR and others
draw near the Proconsul.]*

Katharina,

Is 't well to leave thy father lone and childless?
Because thou deem'st thy God forsooth were angered
At casting this much myrrh before yon image?

KATHARINA.

Father, if thou and I had lived—as oft
I've heard thee wish we lived—in those proud days
When free and glorious dwelt our ancestors
In homes their swords defended, say, wouldst thou
Bid son or daughter of thy house buy life
With treach'ry to thy city? Well I know
With thine own hands thou 'dst sooner slay the recreant
Than see such deed of shame!

LYCOPHRON.

I ask thee not

For treachery.

KATHARINA.

A holier tie—a mightier—

Doth bind me to my God, than e'er hath bound
Sworn soldiers to their chief, true citizens
Unto their city! for I vowed to own
Him only, and all others to forsake!
Thou wouldst not I were perjured?

LYCOPHRON.

Hapless girl,

For thine undoing gifted with high heart,
And speech heroic! But thou sway'st not me
By force of misused eloquence to share
Thy madness! Yet bethink thee, fear'st thou not
The torture—the fell wheels!

KATHARINA.

I fear them sore;

But He for whom I dare them, can endue
The weak with strength.

GALLUS.

Time passes, Lycophron,
And long already thy farewell hath lasted.

LYCOPHRON.

Farewell! is 't thus indeed?

KATHARINA.

Yea father, shake not,
I pray thee, my frail spirit with the sight
Of grief thus hopeless! Grant unto his soul,
Oh God, such light and life as unto mine
Thou 'st giv'n! (*To LYCOPHRON*) In dream and vision,
unto thee
And him thou call'st my bridegroom, will I show me,
If 't is permitted.

LYCOPHRON.

With th' accursed litter
They 're drawing near! What saidst thou of thy
bridegroom,
Lost Katharina? Thou know'st not how well
He loves thee!

KATHARINA.

Yea, I know.

LYCOPHRON.

And he did bid me
Beseech thy pardon for some fault he named not,
But rues right bitterly.

KATHARINA.

Oh tell him, father,
'T was long ere now forgiv'n! Forgive thou too
[*Kneeling.*]
The sorrow that I 've bred thee!

LYCOPHRON.

How forgive
The deeds that tear thee from mine eyes? Yet how
Refuse thy pray'r? 'T is granted thee, Kath'rina.

[*KATHARINA rises; LYCOPHRON clasps
her in his arms, till he is led away on one
side by NICANOR, and she is borne off on
the other in the litter. GALLUS and
ARCHIPPUS remain.*]

GALLUS (*to* ARCHIPPUS).

I feared it would be thus; yet have I sought
To open loopholes, would she but creep through them;
Now—if the sight of yonder wheels appal not
Her senses in such measure as may shake
Her purpose at the last—her doom is sealed.

ARCHIPPUS.

And thou wilt truly slay her?

GALLUS.

'T is not I!

'T is Cæsar!—'T is Rome's law.

ARCHIPPUS.

Most true; I erred

In speech; I did but mean.....

GALLUS.

Oh! good Archippus,
I know thou meant'st naught ill, I know thou'rt ever
The friend doth most avail me; and this day
To me and to the State thou may'st do service,
By lending a quick ear to all that's said—
Ay, whispered—in the house of Lycophron.
That he and his be grieved—it must be so;
That they be angered—I forgive it them;
Still they were wise to mourn for her in silence
Whom they so ill have ruled, nor hearken to
The ravings of that love-sick youth from Antioch,
Who—as it hath been told me—feareth not
To slander me, as though (by execution
Of Cæsar's edict) I had laid this city
Beneath some new-invented tyranny.
'T is but because I used my lawful power,
And barred his entrance hither, to take part
In that wherein nor right nor claim hath he
To judge or witness. We did hold him staunch
Unto our temples; but so utterly
Is he besotted for a girl that mocks him,
That small would be my wonder should he own him
A Christian, ere all's done.

ARCHIPPUS.

What he? Porphyrius?

GALLUS.

Ay, he ! Why, heard'st thou not, that yesterday
 He stood among the throng who saw how death
 Was dealt upon the Christian Alcimus ?
 There did he listen to the maniac's talk
 Of spirits, and of op'ning heaven.....I know not
 What folly more.....but our philosopher
 Exclaimed aloud in hearing of the many
 (When justice had been done) "that in the faith
 Of these same Christians must be somewhat holier,
 And mightier than abideth in the law
 That rules o'er others ; else could none so meekly
 And yet so bravely suffer, when no praise
 Of man was thereby earned." How thinkest thou ?
 Is that the speech it fits a citizen
 To utter in our streets ? Porphyrius
 Of Antioch was—we deemed—as wise as wealthy ;
 And therefore had I strained some points to win
 And keep him to our side ; but now he's shown him
 Thus ill-advised, 't is good that I take heed
 Lest he his riches and his wits surrender
 To them that guide this sect. Wherefore mark thou,
 If Lycophron through grief and wrath be moved
 To let this firebrand kindle him to thoughts
 Rash and rebellious, or if—as beseemeth
 His years—unto the youth he preach submission.

ARCHIPPUS.

I think not Lycophron were minded ever
 To take rash counsels.

GALLUS.

'T is the better for him ;
 Yet mark his bearing.

ARCHIPPUS.

Eye and ear shall lend
 Their utmost service.

GALLUS.

And if aught unwonted
 Should hap, thereof I trust to hear, Archippus,
 Ere these thy friends have space themselves to harm,
 Or others.

ARCHIPPUS.

Thou may'st ever count me, Gallus,
Thy friend, before all else.

GALLUS.

For such I hold thee,
 Well-tried and sure.

ARCHIPPUS.

No longer on thine hours
 Of labour will I trespass.

GALLUS.

For awhile,
 Farewell to thee ! [*Exit* ARCHIPPUS.]

“Before all else *my* friend!”
 Yes, that is he! and would be—were I hence—
 To whomsoe'er he saw upon my seat.
 Archippus is “the friend of the Proconsul;”
 And with good cause, for they who see him thus
 Beside me ever, to the friend of Gallus
 Do honour scarce were paid him else; meantime,
 A well-born spy, who asks no meed in gold,
 Who deems him recompensed when I am gracious,
 Aids both the State and me. (*To a Soldier*) This night's
 first watch
 Thou hast thy station 'twixt the gate that leads
 Unto the fane of Pallas and the postern
 Of this my house?

SOLDIER.

That post our chief assigned.

GALLUS.

Then if one flitted hither through the gloom,
 By the lone path that from the prisons leadeth,
 And uttered this night's word, ask thou no question;
 But rather show the way tow'rds yonder wicket.
 Whate'er befalls, unto thy comrades speak not
 Of this thy secret service. If thou bear thee
 Wisely and warily, it well may be
 Again I'll trust thee; and the hand of Gallus
 Hath ne'er been slow or scant to guerdon them
 Who do his will in silence.

SOLDIER.

The Proconsul

Shall be obeyed.

GALLUS (*turning back, after having gone a step towards the entrance-door*).

And—hark thee!—should that figure,
Having swept by thee, turn or right or left,
Such wand'ring thou must hinder; onward hither
Thou must compel its steps, if need there be
For such compulsion.

SOLDIER.

In all things thy pleasure
Shall be fulfilled. A soldier I—no prater!

[*Exit Soldier. GALLUS remains with no Attendant but a Lybian Slave.*]

GALLUS (*to the Slave*).

Ere thou attend the keeper of the prisons,
This evening, Syphax, I would speak with thee.

[*Exit Lybian, after an obeisance, while GALLUS enters the house.*]

SCENE II. *The Interior of a Prison by Night, dimly lighted by an iron lamp. A small loophole at the back is at first closed, but on being afterwards opened, admits a ray of moonlight. KATHARINA is half reclined on a low bench, leaning against the wall, her eyes closed as in sleep. A wreath of flowers lies on the ground at her feet.*

KATHARINA (*starting, as if suddenly awakened*).

What shakes the cell? What angry sound thus grates
On my stunned ear? I know not if I've slept,
Or waked since twilight; but—'t was causeless dread
O'ercame me now!—for that I heard is naught
Save drawing of the bolt without: the watch
Hath changed, and they—to prove if bolt and bar
Hold fast—do fit them on anew. I would
They'd left me to dream on—if dream it were—
Which gave me back, in living form and semblance,

That on the memory whereof I've fed me
 So long! The crown of lilies o'er me hovered,
 Ay, and the staff of palm! Above them beamed
 A radiant shape, on whom when I upraised
 Mine eyes, as blinded by the sight, to earth
 I sank; nor, till through death's dread gate I've passed,
 May I undazzled gaze upon that brightness!
 Yet, mightier than the terror was the bliss
 Vouchsafed, thus to o'erpay me for the days
 And nights I've lived through here, where on my sense
 The gloom so presses—on my soul so weighs
 The thought of them, who in their ignorance
 Bewail me!.....I am giv'n of the Proconsul
 Three days, whereof one's past, and half its course
 The night hath run! But that through pray'r I hope
 And God-giv'n strength, in firmer arms arrayed
 To meet mine utmost trial, I could pray
 That this next dawn might bring it. Still, it may be
 For a good end the long-drawn sorrow's doomed me.
 Wherefore I bow thereto, and thank His mercy
 Who hath not only deigned with His bright presence
 To glad His captive, but doth oft permit
 Her ears to catch distinct—though faint and far—
 Through the thick dungeon-walls the choral song
 Of them who from the depths of earth adore Him!
 I ever knew the Christians' vault of pray'r
 Was nigh unto the prison: but I deemed not
 (When I, with Theodora, joined my voice
 To theirs who worshipped in that crypt) the strain
 Reached hither, and brought comfort to their spirits
 Who languished here. Their midnight hymn they raise!

Distant CHORUS.

“Lord, to thee, by night and day
 Strong in hope, we sing and pray!”*

KATHARINA.

I should be strong, if any!—I who bear
 This token on my finger! Yet, I need
 Your pray'rs, my brethren, that, through deadly fear,
 And weakness of this flesh, the hope that lives
 Within me, fail not! Once again they chant.

* Words of a hymn in Handel's oratorio of “Theodora.”

Chorus.

“ Though convulsions rock the ground,
 And Thy thunders roll around,
 Still to Thee, by night and day,
 Strong in hope, we sing and pray.”

KATHARINA.

The voices die away ; but to my heart
 Their tones have brought a message, and I share
 That hope they boast, that hope that's born of faith
 Unwav'ring in His love, who through the path
 Of deadly anguish, to the realm of bliss
 And glory, shall transport my ransomed soul !
 (*After a pause*) Meseems as e'en my fevered frame were
 tasting

Some freshness and some rest ! At last my jailor
 Hath oped yon loophole, and the cooling breeze
 Of night plays o'er me.

*[She picks up the wreath of flowers, laying
 them listlessly on her lap.]*

From these flow'rs the slave
 (The Lybian) brought at sunset, the soft air
 Now draws perfume they owned not, when he laid them
 Before me with the pitcher and the lamp.—
 How sweet their breath !—Yet scarce I thanked the
 boy

For his so courteous off'ring ; 't was because
 My thoughts were far away ; and since that time
 (Be it in heav'n-sent dream or waking vision)
 I've sat for this whole watch in contemplation
 Of that, which well might keep both eyes and mind
 From aught on earth. *[Taking the flowers in her hand.]*

Now I remember me,
 He said the flow'rs were rare ;—that this white bell
 Would fairer bloom, if from the rest I loosed it.
 It droopeth now—so tightly bound—no marvel !
 In heathen ignorance he said 't would bring me
 Good luck, if straight I twined that flow'r alone
 Amid my locks. 'T is pity of the youth,
 Who fondly leans upon such vanity.
 Ha ! What hath fall'n ?—a scroll ? It was therefore
 He bid me loose the garland !

PORPHYRIUS (*from the opening behind*).

Katharina,
If 't were but for one moment, draw thou near !

KATHARINA (*rising*).
Porphyrius ! Can it be !

PORPHYRIUS.
Night after night
I 've striv'n for entrance to the prison-court
In vain ; nor pray'r nor gold I 've spared ; from twilight
Beside the outer gate I 've stood till dawning !
Through chance this midnight have I better sped,
And lighted on a youth who gladly sold me
His mantle and his turn for the mid-watch,
The readier, as he knew—too well, alas !—
Naught wider than a close-barred chink doth open
This side thy cell ! Tell *me* now that thou toldest
Thy father !

KATHARINA.
That I 'd pardoned thee ? with lip
And heart as ready I repeat the same.
But say, Porphyrius, is this scroll, that hither
By stealth was brought, from thee ?

PORPHYRIUS.
I would it were !
Could I but bribe the inner prison's jailor,
Short were thy thraldom !.....But what saith it ? Speak !

KATHARINA.
I know not ; I but found it as thou call'dst me.

PORPHYRIUS.
Haste ! read me quick the lines ! bring here the lamp !
[KATHARINA *places the lamp on the ledge
formed by the loophole, and reads from
the strip of parchment.*

KATHARINA (*reading*).
“ If, ere the night's first watch be spent, thou press
The door on thy right hand, 't will ope to thee ;
Speed onward then unto the outer grate,
Which also to thy touch shall yield ; thereafter

Say the night's watchword ('T is Saturnia')
 Unto the sentinel; then forward straight
 Under a narrow portal, whereunto
 That soldier well can guide thee, for therein
 Friends wilt thou find and safety; only fear not
 At once to take the venture. Haste! delay not."

PORPHYRIUS.

Speaks the scroll truth? Hast proved if verily
 That door do stand unbarred?

[KATHARINA *tries the side-door of her cell,*
but finds it bolted.

But no—'t is fast,
 And the first watch is o'er! was't but in mock'ry
 They bid thee fly? When brought they thee these
 lines?

KATHARINA.

At nightfall; but I knew not aught lay hid
 Among those flow'rs, the off'ring of a slave,
 A dark-hued youth, methinks of Gallus' household.

PORPHYRIUS.

Of Gallus!

KATHARINA.

Yes—so said the jailor—twice
 Or thrice with him he came; ere now he bore me
 My food, but spake not, till this eve he told me
 If I did wish for luck, t' unbind this wreath
 He brought me. With my keeper he departed,
 And I but deemed some idle fancy moved him
 To think th' untwining of his flow'rs could sway
 My fortunes. Wherefore from mine orisons
 I stopped not; and when borne aloft on wings
 Of pray'r, to Him my vent'rous spirit soared
 Who with delight that ends not, will repay
 The faith I bear him—of each earthly thing
 I lost all sense—of time and space unwitting,
 Until the crash of bolts at midnight roused me
 To know myself a captive.

PORPHYRIUS.

In ill hour
 Thou paid'st thine orisons!

KATHARINA.

Nay, say not so.

PORPHYRIUS.

I must! for hadst thou earlier read, it may be
That thou wert hence and safe! Deem'st thou some
Christian
Could bribe the warders?

KATHARINA (*re-examining the scroll*).

'T is no Christian wrote

This call.

[*She holds the lamp closer to the strip of
parchment, showing it to PORPHYRIUS
as she speaks.*]

Thou seest it lacks the sign wherewith
We ever mark our tablets.

PORPHYRIUS.

'T is the hand

Of Gallus! but this day I saw his letter
Unto Nicanor, wherein he doth spurn
His pray'r and mine for thee; the self-same fingers
Have traced both scrolls!

KATHARINA.

What meaneth he?

PORPHYRIUS.

Him lists not

To give thee to thy father's arms again,
But fain he'd lure thee to his own; the portal
He talks of, 't is the postern of his palace;
Hadst thou therein once entered—if thou *couldst*
Have 'scaped, I know not—but 't were harder task
Than from that cave to flee, whence thou didst rush
Into his grasp!

KATHARINA.

Those orisons—that trance
Of contemplation thou didst well nigh curse—
They saved me! God hath willed my death, but wills
That unforsworn I die and unpolluted!

PORPHYRIUS.

Better to glut his wrath, than sate his lust !
 But by the gods—yea, by *thy* God—Kath'rina,
 I 'll save thee from such choice, now I can show him
 A judge unjust in the world's eye and Cæsar's !
 He boasts his zeal, denies thy kinsmen's pray'r,
 By secret practice would decoy thee hence,
 Then say thou fled'st through witchcraft ! Give to me
 The scroll !

KATHARINA.

'T will not avail—his might stands firm ;
 And thou wouldst perish in thy sins—'t were better
 I said thine ignorance. I pray thee tell me
 If Alcimus yet lives ?

PORPHYRIUS.

He hath departed.

KATHARINA.

Art sure ? Dost know ?

PORPHYRIUS.

'T was in the market-place,
 And I stood by.

KATHARINA.

To witness his confession ?

PORPHYRIUS.

Ay, and his death.

KATHARINA.

How died he ?

PORPHYRIUS.

As became

Thy teacher, Katharina.

KATHARINA.

Said he naught

I fain would hear ?

PORPHYRIUS.

He bid me say to thee

Ill-omened words.

KATHARINA.

Oh tell me them, Porphyrius,
If e'er thou lov'dst me !

PORPHYRIUS.

By such adjuration
Constrained, that I abhor I needs must utter.
His speech (not mine), was thus—"the pangs are short,
The glory endless, and the Lord stands by,
Through the hard fight still cheering on his soldier."

KATHARINA.

I thank him, and thank thee, who hast compelled
Thy lip to that thou deem'st ill luck and folly.
Not ever wilt thou deem it thus—not ever—
If my heart's pray'r avail. Now thou hast seen
How dies a servant of that Lord, whose life
And death herein are told, if I did give thee
This my best jewel, wouldst thou, when I'm gone,
Read that its pages hold ?

[KATHARINA takes a book from her bosom,
and holds it towards PORPHYRIUS.

PORPHYRIUS.

When thou art gone,
Where think'st thou I abide ? But ere thou'rt torn
From life and light, my love, yon hypocrite
Shall feel their wrath whom now he tramples on !

[PORPHYRIUS receives the book from KATHARINA, and at the same moment seizes the strip of parchment which she still retained in her hand.

I've ta'en thy gift !—And now I've snatched therewith
What proves this Gallus lawless as he's ruthless,
There's hope I read it ere thou'rt gone !

KATHARINA.

Oh rush not
On perils sure as deadly !

PORPHYRIUS.

For thy God
Thou fearest not to die ? As much for thee

I dare, as thou for him! henceforth thy life-thread
 And mine are intertwined; since by this venture
 I save thee, or like fate to thine I share!

[PORPHYRIUS *disappears.*

KATHARINA.

Take pity, Father, on his ignorance!
 And when thou'st called me, as I deem and trust
 Ere long thou'lt do, through death to life, then change
 His heart's wild longing for such calm remembrance,
 As at the last shall lead him to thy knowledge.
 He that once knows, in time must love, the God
 Who hath by faith revealed Him to his soul;
 But I would not he perished, thus on fire
 With earthly love, with wrath, and bitter hate,
 And all unheeding of thy grace and truth!
 Wherefore me rather had, that to the fate
 Whereto I had resigned me, I were left.
 (*After a pause*) A mingled hope and fear in turn possess
 My troubled soul; why hope? Why fear?

[KATHARINA *falls on her knees.*

Thou High

And Holy One, who guardest thy betrothed
 From earthly scathe, dost know if life or death
 Shall best avail me, and on thee I lean!

ACT V.

SCENE I. *A Hall in the Proconsul's Palace at dawning.*GALLUS and his *Lybian Slave* SYPHAX.

GALLUS.

Thou gav'st it her?

SYPHAX.

And bade her loose the wreath
That bound it, if she e'er would own good fortune.
I might not, in the jailor's sight, risk more.

GALLUS.

Thou might'st have lingered.

SYPHAX.

Nay my lord, the keeper
Sends *me* first out.

GALLUS.

The fellow's ill to deal with,
I know, or had not needed to give *thee*
Such charge.

SYPHAX.

Moreover, had I angered him,
He scarce had giv'n me license to go seek
The staff I'd dropped, whereby I found occasion
To do thy bidding, master, and withdraw
The bolts.

GALLUS.

It profits much that thou withdrew'st them!
Go hence!

[*Exit SYPHAX.*]SLAVE (*entering*).

Here's one would speak unto my lord.

GALLUS (*to a Centurion who enters as the Slave withdraws*).
What wouldst thou, friend?

CENTURION.

'T is but that the Proconsul
Should know, that he who kept the second watch
On this side of the prison, found the door
Of Katharina's cell unbarred and chainless.

GALLUS.

Hath she then 'scaped?

CENTURION.

Not so; he straight assured him
(Half op'ning that same door) the pris'ner lay
Therein—(and sleeping, as him seemed). He hasted
To draw both bolt and bar; and ere the light,
Did tell to me this chance—if chance it were.

GALLUS.

I praise his watchfulness and thine. That he
Did mark, is passing strange; and thereinto
'T is fit we look; what thence I may trace out
Of Christian plots, or knav'ry of our jailors,
I 'll tell thee when I 've learnt, as learn I shall,
Ere long, now thou the clue hast giv'n.

CENTURION.

I take

My leave.

GALLUS.

Farewell; but—speak not in the city
Of this thou 'st told me—no—nor in the cohort.

CENTURION.

No ear shall hear thereof.

[*Exit Centurion.*]

GALLUS.

She 's not dull-witted,
To fail of guessing what almost was told her,
Nor tim'rous, from a venture for her life
To shrink, because 't was doubtful; I did hope
She 'd deem that some of her own sect had oped her
A path to flight.

(*Enter the Soldier who conversed with GALLUS in the pre-
ceding Act.*)

(*To the Soldier*) Did none in the first watch

Walk forth from th' inner prison, as I told thee
It might befall?

SOLDIER.

No, none.

GALLUS.

She hath not fled
Elsewhere? Thou 'rt sure?

SOLDIER.

I said there came forth none
Through the first watch; but knoweth the Proconsul
That he who kept the mid-watch—

GALLUS.

I have heard
Those tidings; hie thee hence, and take no note,
In outward seeming, of the talk may pass
Thereon. *[Exit Soldier.]*

And here I 've waited! deeming ever
(Though the first watch was spent) 't was possible
Some chance had but delayed her, and good hap
Might bring her still, where—if she 'd once set foot,—
Methinks she had met her master! one unwont
To let his luck slip by, as did the fool
Porphyrius! Can it be my Lybian slave
Betrayed me, and by naming of my name
Affrighted the shy bird? Were 't not that here
In Alexandria, there is many a one,
Both Greek and Jew, doth watch my ev'ry step
In hate and envy, I had sought ere now
Myself her prison cell; but through the city
'T were noised straightway. Unto her fate I needs
Must leave that beauty. Than herself I were
E'en madder, if I perilled aught to save
What I may ne'er enjoy.

(Enter ARCHIPPUS.)

'T is earlier, friend,
Than here I 'm wont to see thee! Nay, thou 'rt welcome!
But say, what hath befall'n?

ARCHIPPUS.

Not yet hath aught
Befall'n; and therefore have I come to warn thee

Of that which might betide. Porphyrius
 (As thou didst prophecy), with his own madness
 Infecteth Lycophron, persuadeth him
 To credit sland'rous fables, talks as though
 He owned some proof, writ in thy hand, to show thee
 Lawless and false.

GALLUS.

What proof?

ARCHIPPUS.

'T is like he forged it;
 But 't is a strip of parchment or papyrus,
 I know not which, wherein (he says) thou biddest
 Kath'rina seek thee, tell'st her that the gates
 Shall open to her touch.

GALLUS.

Such meed we gain
 Who strive to bear us faithfully ! Because
 I hearkened not to him, and somewhat scrupled
 To break Rome's law and Cæsar's, but to serve
 A lover's pleasure, lo ! this plot he weaves
 Against mine honour and my life ! And saidst thou
 That Lycophron had listened to his tales ?

ARCHIPPUS.

I fear me sore he hath.

GALLUS.

And 't is their aim
 To spread this calumny ?

ARCHIPPUS.

Unless by deeds,
 Rather than warning words thou hinder them,
 By the first hour of day throughout the city
 'T will run. Porphyrius in the market-place
 Will ring the change on each high-sounding word
 That ever fooled the many.

[*At a signal from GALLUS, a Slave comes forward, and after receiving some whispered directions, disappears.*]

GALLUS.

Yes, he fain

Would talk unto the multitude of wrongs
 Dealt on the innocent by tyrant force
 And Roman cruelty !.....but scarce I 'm minded
 This time to let our citizens enjoy
 Instruction from his tongue. I thank thee, friend,
 For these thy tidings, which, an hour delayed,
 Had little profited to save this city
 From tumult and from blood.

[*A band of Soldiers, headed by a Centurion,
 appears in the hall.*

Now ere the spark
 Have fall'n among the straw, (for thereunto
 The Alexandrian crowd may well be likened),
 'T is mine to quench it. Dwells the Antiochian
 Still under thy friend's roof?

ARCHIPPUS.

'T was there I left him
 But now ; for thither had Nicanor called me
 Before the light, to ask me in the porch
 My counsel for himself.

GALLUS (*to the Soldiers*).

Haste ye to bring
 Fast bound to my tribunal, Lycophron,
 Son of Charistus, and Porphyrius
 His guest from Antioch.

[*Exeunt Centurions and Soldiers.*

(*To ARCHIPPUS*) Sawest thou the writing
 He said was mine ?

ARCHIPPUS.

I did but hear thereof.

GALLUS.

And saith he who did give the same to him ?

ARCHIPPUS.

If aught were true he talked of—'t was Kath'rina.

GALLUS (*aside*).

Then 't is her life or mine ! (*Aloud*) So ! she stands firm
 Unto her faith, but holds it not a crime,
 With sland'rous fables to belie the judge
 Whose mercy she despises !

ARCHIPPUS.

I know not
That Katharina hath or voice or part
In this, wherein she 's but the instrument
That serves another's fury.

GALLUS.

It may be ;
But one whose name 's a handle for sedition,
Disturbs the State ; and them who serve such purpose
Must we remove ; yea, speedily.

[GALLUS, *after beckoning to another band of
Soldiers, waiting unseen in the adjoining
gallery, goes to a table and hastily signs
a parchment.*

(*Aside*) Proud Christian,
When pressed betwixt the wheels, too late wilt thou
Repent thy stiff-necked folly ! To Porphyrius—
To him she seemed to scorn—hath she betrayed me !
I 've borne me like a boy ! And fit it is

(*Enter Soldiers*).

That I be mocked like one. But she shall pay
For that she 's cost me.

(*Aloud to the Soldiers as he gives the parchment to their
leader.*) Be the prisoner,

The Christian, Katharina, straight led forth
To instant execution.

[*Exeunt Soldiers.*

ARCHIPPUS.

This is sudden !

GALLUS.

'T is just ; and I was moon-struck when I gave her
The respite she—or her's—have used to plot in.
Her father and Porphyrius shall behold
Her doom's fulfilment ; well if they submit them
In silence ; for a factious threat, a murmur,
Will prove them that they are—conspirators—
Against the empire's order ! And perchance
'T were good I gave this day a bloody warning
To rebels, as to Christians, in this city.

[*Exeunt GALLUS and ARCHIPPUS.*

SCENE II. *The Market-place in Alexandria. Temple of Jupiter in the background. Immediately before it is the scaffold, on which are placed the wheels of torture. The throng of Citizens, in the midst of which are LYCOPHRON, PORPHYRIUS, and NICANOR, is gradually increased by the entrance of Alexandrians of all classes.*

NICANOR (*to LYCOPHRON and PORPHYRIUS*).

'T will not avail! (*To the Citizens*) 'T were better ye
dispersed
Ere came worse evil!

LYCOPHRON.

Gallus can but slay
One who is weary of a life that 's blasted
With woes and wrongs!

PORPHYRIUS.

How think ye, citizens,
Of that man's justice, who, with well-feigned zeal
For Cæsar and the gods, to death condemning
A free-born maid, whose pardon he denies
Unto her father's prayer, yet seeks t' entice her
By night into his palace from her prison,
Ye all may think wherefore? The maid is sprung
From Lycophon.... The man.... 'T is your Proconsul!

NICANOR (*to the Citizens and PORPHYRIUS*).

Nay, but there lacketh proof!

PORPHYRIUS.

There lacketh none!
(*To NICANOR*) Thyself didst know his hand!

NICANOR.

I said, in sooth
'T was like, but.....

PORPHYRIUS.

'T is his own!
(*To the Citizens*) Draw near, and see
Such proof as shall declare what honesty
Lives in your ruler's breast, what true intent
And blameless purpose guide the acts of Gallus!

Enter a body of Soldiers led by a Centurion, who approaches
LYCOPHRON and PORPHYRIUS.

CENTURION.

In the Proconsul's name, for factious words,
And deeds rebellious, I hereby command ye,
Porphyrius of Antioch, Lycophron,
Son of Charistus, follow where we lead
To the Proconsul's presence.

PORPHYRIUS.

Face to face
Shall Gallus hear from me the accusation
I here have laid against him; but to these
First would I show the token that doth prove him
[*The Soldiers, at a sign from their Chief,*
lay hands on LYCOPHRON and POR-
PHYRIUS.

That thing he is. (*To the Citizens.*) Stand by us, friends!
[*The Alexandrian Elders and Citizens*
draw back as the Soldiers seize LYCO-
PHRON and PORPHYRIUS.

NICANOR.

Thus ever
Hath it befallen them who looked for help
Or justice, through the valour of a crowd!
[*While the Soldiers are fettering LYCO-*
PHRON and PORPHYRIUS, ARCHIPPUS
emerges from the throng, and draws near
NICANOR.

ARCHIPPUS.

Is 't possible? Porphyrius bound? Our friend too!

NICANOR.

Thou seest it; hard I strove to rein them in
From this their rashness. Still, 't is marvellous
That Gallus, as by divination prompted,
Should, ere Porphyrius' lip had yet accused him,
Send forth this band! Think'st thou that it could be

He'd heard of aught we spake of in the porch
Of Lycophron ere dawn?

ARCHIPPUS.

I may not say
That 't is impossible (though fain I'd hold
It were) for wondrous is the speed wherewith
All flies, I know not how, into his ear.

*Enter GALLUS attended by Lictors, and a numerous body
of Soldiers, who line the square of the Market-place.*

NICANOR.

Behold! he comes! and glaring angrily
Upon those twain!

ARCHIPPUS.

He fears them.

NICANOR.

'T is the more
Of peril to their lives! No hate like that
Which fear doth breed! But he delays not.....hastens
At once to meet, and straightway smite his foes.

*[GALLUS ascends the judgment-seat, LYCO-
PHRON and PORPHYRIUS are placed before
him; the Scribes and other Assistants seat
themselves in the same order as in the first
scene of the Second Act.]*

ARCHIPPUS.

And therein doth he well, if he would keep
His rule—perchance his life. So much I needs
Must say, though grieving for thy kinsman's sake.

NICANOR (*looking at LYCOPHRON*).

He hearkened not to me, was borne along
By the boy's wrath, and thought not the Proconsul
Could deal thus swiftly; had the cohort tarried
Awhile, it may be Greeks and Jews had banded
Together 'gainst him; as we've seen ere now
In Alexandrian tumults; and so far
I would they'd braved him, as might have compelled
His freeing of the damsel.

ARCHIPPUS.

Hush, take heed !

There are who mark thee. Now would Gallus speak.

GALLUS.

Well pleased am I, ye men of Alexandria,
 That neither few nor mean are ye who've thronged
 To witness that, which I to-day am ealled
 In virtue of my place to execute.
 For I would have ye know, that not for naught
 I punish or rebuke, whate'er the tongue
 Of busy malice whisper. Ye have heard
 (For, though the judgment in my dwelling's court,
 Not here, did pass, no secret was the act)
 Ye've heard, I say, that Katharina, daughter
 Of Lycophron, the Christian faith confessing,
 By me to death was sentenced.....I forbore
 To speed the doom's fulfilment; in three days
 She might recall.....unsay.....what in ill hour
 She'd spoken; but by tidings sure (though gained
 Through means I give no 'count of save to Cæsar)
 I've learnt but now she hath employed that space
 In merey granted, to devise a lie,
 Which, by her kin repeated, should affix
 Black stains upon my name; wherefore, now hopeless
 Of her repentance (who from clemency
 Allowed her, framed a weapon wherewithal
 To pierce the ruler who right fain had spared her)
 I here condemn her in your sight and theirs
 Whom her false tongue deluded, not alone
 As Christian, 'twixt yon wheels to expiate
 Her crime, but as rebellious unto Cæsar,
 And him who wields his might. This hour must see
 Her punishment, who, if till this day's noon
 She'd lived, had wrought confusion and revolt
 In your fair city.

PORPHYRIUS.

Worse than worst confusion
 Is slav'ry to a lustful hypoerite !

LYCOPHRON.

Right careful are you of your lives, ye elders

Of Alexandria ! Heed ye each as much
Your honour ?

GALLUS.

Well I know whereunto point
These words. I've heard the tale ! But wherewith
prove ye
Your accusation ?

PORPHYRIUS.

With the lines which these
By force have snatched from me—the lines thy hand
Did write—which thine own slave to her did give
Who gave them me.

GALLUS (*to the CENTURION*).

Reach here the scroll (*receiving and
examining the strip of parchment*). That some
Have forged it skilfully, 't is plain ; that some too
Have bribed my Lybian boy, 't is like ; this morn
He's fled ; none sees him in my house. The keeping
Of this great city's peace, to me entrusted,
And by these madmen perilled, doth demand
Both safeguard and example. When the wrath
Of gods and men, by Katharina's fate
Hath been appeased, by mine authority,
As Cæsar's delegate, for treas'nous acts,
And speech seditious, I ordain that these,
Lycophron and Porphyrius, with their heads
Do answer for their fault ; necessity
Dispensing with such forms as would delay
Just judgment.

A guarded litter is borne in, out of which KATHARINA steps.

KATHARINA.

I give thanks to the Proconsul
That he hath shortened the long agony
Wherein I panted ; but.....My father bound !
Yea, and Porphyrius !

CENTURION.

Child of Lycophron,
In evil hour for thee and thine was taught thee
The Galilæan's lore ! Upon thy sire,

And on thy bridegroom doth th' avenging demon
Wreak thine impiety ; since, be they guilty,
Or but ill-starred, for treason wrought or purposed,
They 're doomed to death.

KATHARINA.

To death !

GALLUS.

Thank thou thyself
Kath'rina, for their fate ! Thou shouldst have thought
Thereon, when thou didst give this forgery
Unto Porphyrius.

KATHARINA.

I did yield it up
Unwillingly.....from whence it came I knew not.....
If with ill end 't was writ, the Lord forgive
Its writer, from whose snares by heav'nly grace
I 'scaped ! But spare them, Gallus ! 't is enough
One of our house do perish !

PORPHYRIUS.

Ask him not
Favour or right for me ! Could I have moved (*looking*
at the Citizens)
These slaves in time, 't is we should sit on him
In judgment ! Well I knew or he or I
Should fall, but deemed such chance was worth the
taking
For thee, Kath'rina !

KATHARINA.

How may I sustain
That which I thought in patient hope to bear,
Now that I'm made unto my father's doom
The hapless instrument ? Again I pray thee
(*To LYCOPHRON*)
Forgive thy child !

LYCOPHRON.

Since thou to worlds beneath
Wouldst needs betake thee, the old man thou leavest
Alone as well may share thy lot as wail it.

KATHARINA.

Alas ! e'en more than your dear lives ye've ventured
For me !

PORPHYRIUS.

Said I not, Oh my love, our life-thread
Was intertwined ? An envious Fate forbids
That I should save thee, but—where thou dost go,
I follow ! and will love thee e'en in Hades !

KATHARINA.

In Hades ! If indeed thou 'dst look on me,
When both are disentangled from this clay,
Thou must—yet living—call on Him who died
For thee and me ; since to His home I go !
Thou too, my father.....

LYCOPHRON.

Tell me not ! Thy God
Too dear hath cost me !

KATHARINA.

For this cause it is
That I so ill endure that ye should perish
In darkness ! (*To PORPHYRIUS*) I did hope some gleam
had shone
From the true light already upon thee,
And thence reflected on my sire, might dawn
Ere long. Now would I that some sign—some marvel—
In visible defiance of that order
Which guides our earth's course, should accompany
My parting hence, that so in my last hour
Ye might confess His might, and win His grace,
Who doth receive all them who truly turn
Unto him for that space, how short soe'er
That 's giv'n them !

GALLUS.

Katharina, thou hast spent
Th' allotted minutes. Haste thee to ascend
The scaffold.

PORPHYRIUS (*to the Citizens and Soldiers*).

Will ye look upon this deed ?

KATHARINA.

God calm thy heart, Porphyrius ! Farewell, father !

[KATHARINA *begins to ascend the steps of the scaffold.*

GALLUS (*to KATHARINA*).

Seest thou the wheels ? Consider ! yet may'st thou
 Confess thy treason, and repent thereof,
 E'en as of thine impiety ; but once
 I've giv'n the signal, none can stop the rush
 Of the sharp circles that shall rend thy flesh
 To atoms ere thou perish.

KATHARINA.

I but ask thee
 Space for a moment's pray'r to Him for whom
 I willingly endure the pains decreed me.

GALLUS.

I grant it, so 't is brief.

[KATHARINA, *on the steps of the scaffold, stands facing the multitude, both hands raised to heaven.*

KATHARINA.

Thou 'st said, Oh, Lord,
 That thou wouldst ever hear their pray'r who ask
 Believing ! And in fulness of that faith,
 And hope and love, wherewith thou hast endued me,
 At my life's term, I do implore of thee,
 By baring of thine arm, by plain and open
 Forth-showing of thy strength, at once to smite
 Thy bride with speedy death, and from those twain
 I leave on earth, to ward the fate would yield them
 Untaught of Thee, and unbaptized, to perish !
 Lo ! thou hast heard ! for in my soul I feel
 Thine answer, my Redeemer and my Lord !
 Strike ! for I wait the blow that shall divide me
 From all earth's fears and woes ! Behold the ring
 Unsullied ! for I've proved my love ! Now call

Thy martyr to Thy home ! there crowned and clad
In bridal white, to gaze on thee for ever !

[*A thunderbolt from a cloudless sky shivers the wheels of torture, fells both scaffold and executioners to the ground, and striking KATHARINA herself on the breast, lays her dead among the ruins. A sudden gloom overspreads the earth ; Citizens and Soldiers, including GALLUS, NICANOR and ARCHIPPUS, fly on all sides ; the shackles fall from the hands of LYCOPHRON and PORPHYRIUS, who remain alone kneeling beside the body.*

PORPHYRIUS.

Her pray'r is heard ! Her God *hath* visibly
Revealed Him !—but hath snatched her hence e'en while
Avenging of her wrong ! The lambent flame
That circles her fair brow enough dispels
The gath'ring gloom, that we should see how pale,
How lifeless is this form !

LYCOPHRON.

And yet unscathed
By the hot bolt she lies !

PORPHYRIUS.

Behold ! 't is here
It smote ! and in a cross's form 't is branded
On her white breast ! Yea, thus with His own token
The Crucified hath claimed her !

LYCOPHRON.

Hath it been
His might which thus breaks forth ? Lo ! how the fane
Of Jove doth totter to its base ! doth quake
As quakes th' affrighted earth ! Column and porch
And roof in fragments sink !—in crashing ruin !

CHORUS.

“Lord, to Thee by night and day,
Strong in hope we sing and pray.”

LYCOPHRON (*rising*).

Whence is that sound ? Who bend their steps this way ?

PORPHYRIUS (*his eyes still fixed on KATHARINA'S body*).
 Methinks that they be Christians, whom the sight
 Of this wide square deserted thus, emboldens
 To tread it, chanting as they go. It may be
 They knew what should befall, and come t' adore her.

Chorus of CHRISTIANS entering, led by a PRIEST.

“ Though convulsions rock the ground,
 And thy thunders roll around,
 Still to thee by night and day,
 Strong in hope we sing and pray !”

LYCOPHRON.

Whoe'er ye be, who thus amid the strife
 And uproar of the elements, sing forth
 Your songs in seeming peace, turn hence, withdraw
 Your presence from the mourners who sit here
 Wailing their dead.

CHRISTIAN PRIEST.

To wail the dead we also
 Are come—no, not to wail—to honour rather
 With hymn and pray'r unto her God and ours,
 The virgin Katharina, who ('t was told us)
 Hath perished by heav'n's bolt, by cruelty
 Of man untouched.

PORPHYRIUS (*looking up, but without rising from the ground*).

'T was truly told ye, Christians,
 If such ye be, for here on earth doth lie
 That fairest maid, that holiest, and that gentlest,
 Whom, but for your sad lore, I should have held
 Living within mine arms, where now she resteth
 Lifeless, and cold, and soulless. To her God
 And yours she hath departed, well I know ;
 She needs nor hymn nor pray'r to speed her heav'nward !
 Wherefore unto her father and to me
 Leave ye her fun'ral rites, which we would pay
 Untroubled.

CHRISTIAN PRIEST.

If the Being of our Lord

So far thou own, to her thou lov'dst deny not
 Observance of such acts as shall declare
 In faith of whom she lived and died.

LYCOPHRON.

I give not
 My child to the cold earth, with rites half Jewish,
 Half barbarous ! the sacred flame to ashes
 Shall burn her corpse, as once it burned her mother's ;
 Depart !

CHRISTIAN PRIEST.

We would but greet the martyred maid
 With one brief song.

LYCOPHRON.

Ye fear not to uplift
 Forbidden orisons ?

CHRISTIAN PRIEST.

The stern Proconsul
 Lies crushed beneath yon idol's shattered dome,
 Whereto he fled in terror from the fire
 Of heav'n descending on his guilty head.

LYCOPHRON.

Your God hath dealt just judgment ; ne'ertheless
 A father's right it is—(the dearest too,
 Because the saddest) to his child to give
 In his own guise what to the dead we owe.

CHRISTIAN PRIEST.

In sullen grief he 's turned away ; the sorrow
 Of them who know not God doth but corrode
 The unregen'rate heart. Ha ! what hath gleamed
 Above, around, as 't were a second dawning ?
 Behold yon rosy cloud that floateth near
 And nearer ! In mid air it hov'reth—sinketh—
 Changing its hue to golden as it meeteth
 Earth's verge ! The youth perceives it not—his eyes
 Are fixed in hopeless longing on her form
 With whose bright spirit his in vain would commune !

VOICE FROM THE CLOUD.

Withdraw thy clasping arms, Porphyrius,

From the dead maiden ! Rise, and thou shalt see,
Thou and her sire, what fun'ral rites await her.

PORPHYRIUS.

A might unknown compelleth me ! Who spake
From out the cloud ? It breaks—dissolves ! What light
Within it shines ? The veiling mist hath vanished !
And palpably to sense four winged genii
Stand forth ! The first with lily-wreaths hath crowned
her !

The second in her hand hath laid his palm-branch !
And two have poised them on their silv'ry pinions
Above ! They bend—they lift her hence—they bear her
Aloft ! Whence come ye ? Say ! and whither speed ye ?

CHRISTIAN PRIEST.

The messengers of God they be, come hither
From rites idolatrous to save the frame
Where dwelt that sainted soul, and give to view
Of them who else were blind, the wondrous grace
Her love and her endurance earned on high.

LYCOPHRON.

Eastward they soar ! still eastward ! Unto thee
Who e'er shall guide me, Oh my child !

PORPHYRIUS.

There's one
Shall guide us thither ! He who by the light
Of yonder parting glory beckons us
To follow where she leads ! The Christians' God
Is God alone !—and life or death betide,
His faith will I confess, who thus doth call me !

THE END.







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